

INDIAN LIBERALISM
—A STUDY—

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[SILVER JUBILEE VOLUME]

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by

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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FOREWORD

At the meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation held immediately after the close of the last session of the Federation held in Bombay in December 1943, Mr. E. Vinayak Row made a suggestion that the Federation should celebrate its Silver Jubilee in 1945 and on that auspicious occasion, issue a Souvenir giving the origin and history of the Indian Liberal Party. The Council referred the matter to the Western India National Liberal Association, Bombay, for report. That Association after considering the matter and its financial implications, informed the Council that the scheme was a good one and that it was prepared to undertake the work of publishing the Jubilee Memorial Volume. This suggestion was agreed to and the Association then requested Prof. V. N. Naik, till lately Head of the English Department of the Ramnarain Ruia College, Bombay, and a member of the Indian Liberal Party from its inception, to write the book. The Volume is now ready and is placed before the Party and the public.

*Bombay,
28th Feb. 1945.*

CHIMANLAL H. SETALVAD.

INTRODUCTION

The political awakening of India may be said to date not later than the first Indian National Congress in 1885. In the course of its evolution there have been differences of aim and method which are natural and inevitable in the history of any political movement. When such differences continue for a long time, a separate organisation becomes justifiable. The conviction that there were such radical differences among the members of the Congress led to the formation of a separate organisation in 1918. The members of this organisation were first known as 'moderates,' and their designation was subsequently changed into 'National Liberals.' This party has lived and continued to function for over quarter of a century, and its history furnishes sufficient justification for the secession of 1918. The differences between the Congress and the National Liberal Federation are radical and cannot be bridged over. The Liberal Party is convinced that the policy it has followed is the only sound one that could have been followed in the circumstances of the case, and it believes that if this policy had been steadily pursued by all parties, the country could have made a much greater political advance.

The history of the Liberal Party is clearly set forth in this book, though it may perhaps be considered by many at too great length. The book now published gives a very readable history of the political life of the country since 1918. The leaders whose views are discussed form a galaxy of the most talented public men in this country whose names are so well known that it is unnecessary to add any words of commendation to induce the public to read the book.

I hope that the book will commend itself to a growing circle of the thoughtful public in India.

Mylapore, Madras, }
15th May 1945.

P. S. SIVASWAMY Aiyer.

CHAPTER I

THE LIBERAL TRADITION —A RETROSPECT

THE tradition of liberalism in India is much older than the formation of the Liberal Party as a separate body from the Indian National Congress in the year 1918. The tradition dates back to Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was the pioneer of all progressive movements in India including political progress as well. Himself a devout worshipper at the shrine of liberty, he realised even so far back as 1820 that liberty to be properly enjoyed must be regulated liberty, that freedom has its own restraints as much as order. In the field of social and religious reform no less than in journalism and politics, his one endeavour was to awaken his countrymen not only to their rights as free men, but also to their obligations to society. He strove in his day, and all by himself, to impress upon them one supreme lesson, namely, to understand their country's past aright, and to assimilate thoroughly to that past the light that had come from the West as the result of British connection with India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's liberalism was before the dawn of liberalism in Europe, and before its rise in the mid-Victorian period of English history.

Another great liberal along the same line was Mahadeo Govind Ranade, endowed with the gifts of head and heart greater far than those of any of his contemporaries, or than of any other man after him.

gentlemen, whether Mr. Dadabhai uses mild or bitter words, our place is round his standard—by his side. Whoever repudiates Dadabhai, he is none of us. Whoever tries to lay rude and irreverent hands on him, strike him down.” On an occasion of unveiling Dadabhai’s portrait in the Framji Cowasji Institute in Bombay, Ranade called him the teacher of political India—“one in three hundred millions, one in a century.” About Mehta, Gokhale often said that “he would rather be wrong *with* Mehta than right *without* him.”

ANIMATED MODERATION

Such were the men who, on this side of India, had guided the Indian National Congress in its early and formative years. These leaders piloted the institution as a central body that had for its aim the focussing of all political thought in the country, and the shaping of public opinion by that thought, so that they might help the political evolution of India along right lines. A writer of earlier days has described their liberalism, in one aspect of it, as “animated moderation”—a phrase borrowed by him from Walter Bagehot’s famous book “Physics and Politics”. What is animated moderation? Bagehot explains it as follows: “It is a subtle quality or combination of qualities singularly useful in practical life. It is, in fact, a union of life with measure, of spirit with reasonableness.” Then Bagehot proceeds to show how that quality works out in political action. “The man of animated moderation,” he says, “has plenty of energy in him, and yet he does not go too far, and, therefore, he is a success. He has plenty of go in him; but he knows when to pull up.” A mind instinct with this spirit is not an idiosyncratic mind violently disposed to extremes of opinion. He is not, on the other hand, “a bodiless thinker or an ineffectual scholar.”

"The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organisation we have in India. It has had nearly fifty years of life, during which period it has without exception held its sessions. It is what it means—national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent Indian interests. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure for me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavius Hume we know as the father of the Congress. It was nursed by two great Parsees, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji whom all India delighted to recognise as its grand old man. From its very commencement the Congress had Mussalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians—I might say all religious sects and communities represented on it. The late Budruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Mussalmans and Parsees as its Presidents."

CO-OPERATION AND CRITICISM

The tradition established by the stalwarts of the Congress whom Mr. Gandhi has mentioned in the above extract, it departed from since 1918, and threw it completely overboard in 1920, at the instance of Mr. Gandhi himself, when it resolved to boycott the new Councils under the Montagu Reforms of 1919 and went into the wilderness of non-co-operation. The fundamental position of the Congress, till then, as one of its Presidents had put it, was "to co-operate where we can and criticise where we must". At the end of the Nagpur Session of the Congress in 1920, Mr. Gandhi wrote about the change brought about by him in the Congress as follows :

"The Congress changed entirely from this year, becoming a constructive instead of a petitioning body. The longest and the most important Congress ever held has come and gone. It was the biggest demonstration ever held against the present system of Government. The President uttered the whole truth when he said that it was a Congress in which instead of the President and the leaders driving the people, the people drove him and the latter."

intent on constructive work. In June 1924 we knew what that constructive work had come to. Babu Rajendra Prasad writes about it in his introduction to the second volume of collected writings known as *Young India* (1924-26).

"The meeting ended in gloom and Mahatma Gandhi was pained beyond measure to see the disruption of the great movement brought about as much by those who had thrown out his programme during his absence as by the inactivity, disorganisation and demoralisation of those who yet professed to follow him."

The Congress between the years 1885-1905 was, perhaps, a petitioning body, was following, as some of the extremists in it said at the time, "a policy of mendicancy", though that charge was fully answered in the presidential speech of Dadabhai Naoroji at Calcutta in 1906. But it had never suffered the fate described above in the words of Babu Rajendra Prasad. On the other hand, it had gone from strength to strength, and its influence had to be recognised in 1906 by a writer and statesman like Lord Morley. In his first speech as the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Morley said :

"Then there is the Congress. I do not say I agree with all that the Congress desires but speaking broadly of what I conceive to be at the bottom of the Congress, I do not see why any one who takes a cool and steady view of Indian Government should be frightened. I will not at once conclude that, because a man is dissatisfied and discontented, he is disaffected. Why, our own reforms and changes have been achieved by dissatisfied men who were no more disaffected than you or I. If there be disaffection—and there may be some—I will not, so far as I have anything to do with the Government of India, play the game of disaffection by exaggerating the danger or by overreadiness to scent evil."

In spite of some flare up of turmoil and acute differences between the two wings of the Congress at

we look up to him as the saint, sage and seer of Indian politics. He was the first to set the lesson in India of dedicated life. Born poor, he remained poor all his life in the service of his country and its people. He never spoke without books, without facts and figures to support the statements that he made, as one may know from his monumental work on "Poverty and un-British rule in India". Patience and perseverance were his watchwords. He had his "vision splendid" about the future of India. But his feet were firmly planted on the path he had to tread. A pure life, a simple life, a noble life, a dedicated, saintly life—that was Dadabhai Naoroji.

PURE POLITICS

In the Congress of 1886, this grand old man of India made the following important declaration, which all of us would do well to lay to heart. Thereby he made the Congress a purely political organisation, not concerned with the social and religious problems of the different communities in India. Said Dadabhai Naoroji :

"Certainly no member of this National Congress is more alive to the necessity of social reform than I am; but, gentlemen, for everything there are proper times, proper circumstances, and proper places; we are met together as a political body to represent to our rulers our political aspirations, not to discuss social reforms; and if you blame us for ignoring these, you should blame the House of Commons for not discussing the abstruse problems on mathematics and metaphysics. But, besides this, there are here Hindus of every caste, amongst whom, even in the same province, customs, and social arrangements differ widely,—there are Mohammedans, and Christians of various denominations, there are Parsees, Sikhs, Bramhos and what not—men, indeed, of each and all of those numerous classes which in the aggregate constitute the people of India. A National Congress must confine itself to ques-

who defined that goal for India in his Congress Presidential address in Bombay in 1904; Gokhale reiterated it at Benares in 1905 ; and Dadabhai set his seal upon it at Calcutta in 1906. Complete independence, that implied the severance of the British connection, was not their creed. For they knew then, as we do now, that India, as an isolated unit, would never be able to defend herself from foreign aggression. Her safety lay in her association, as an integral member, with the British Commonwealth of Nations. The conception of the British Empire has undergone during the interval a complete change, so that Dominion Status means to-day a higher and a freer status than what was then implied by the term "self-government on colonial lines". It gives the "dominions" all the rights and privileges of autonomy and self-government without the disadvantages and perils of an isolated existence. The famous speech of Mr. C. R. Das at the Faridpur Conference—his last political will and testament—has made the fact clear beyond all doubt and glossing over. We give here the following pertinent quotation from that speech made by him on May 2nd, 1925:

"The Empire idea gives us a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion Status to-day is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance, by consent of those who form part of the Empire, for material advantages in the real spirit of co-operation. It is realised that under modern conditions no nation can live in isolation, and Dominion Status, while it affords complete protection to each constituent composing the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire, secures to each the rights to realise itself, develop itself, and fulfil itself, and, therefore, it expresses and implies all the elements of Swaraj I have mentioned."

The founders of the Congress, including men like Dadabhai, Mehta and Gokhale, were fully aware of the

bureaucrat, holding the highest office in the State in the regime of Lord Elgin, Sir James Westland, had described as the protagonist of the "New Spirit" in India. It was on the 13th of August 1914 that Mehta spoke these words, and we have no doubt what he would have said if he were in our midst to-day.

EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

In the speech from which we have quoted, Mehta has referred to "our rights, our charters, our privileges". And that was exactly the position of Dadabhai Naoroji in his fight for Swaraj as we know from his presidential address to the Congress in 1906. The highest aspiration which he cherished for Indians was their recognition as British citizens not only in name but in fact. He had no use for birth-right or an abstract right. He hated craft and credulity on the one hand as much as he hated refined policy and finessing on the other. He showed up the British statesman by his proclamations, promises and charters, which he had given to the ear only to break them to the heart. He had no mercy for the bureaucrat in India who was described by another great Indian in the Council Hall as one "who like the Bourbon never learnt and never forgot".

Turning to Dadabhai's last political utterance we find India's claim to full citizenship made out on the strength of past charters and promises. He quotes *seriatim* the solemn pledges given to India by England. While confessing frankly to the fact that "all our sufferings and evils in the past centuries" were due to the British—un-British—rule in India, he demanded a reparation for them by appeal to "the revival in England of the old British instinct of liberty and self-government." And in that matter, again, he appealed

compromise. They did not "dream the impossible and neglect the attainable"—to use the words of that great statesman of Italy, Count Cavour. They did not allow mere enthusiasm and demonstration to do duty for reasoned scrutiny. They had their visions and ideals, but they were keen-eyed and level-headed enough to face hard facts. Hence, while desiring India to be free, they were convinced in their mind, that the freedom they cherished for their motherland could not be achieved by talking of "complete independence" and "direct action".

The self-government within the Empire has come to mean now much more than what it connoted when they wrote and spoke. Even when Mr. C. R. Das wrote of Dominion Status in 1925, it had not the meaning and import which it had acquired since, as the result of the Balfour Declaration of 1926 and the Statute of Westminster after it. Sir Stafford Cripps, the latest emissary of peace from England to India, has made this position clear. In his book on "Subject India" written by a friend of India, Mr. Brailsford, this fact is stated in the plainest of terms. First, he mentions what Sir Stafford told the Indian Journalists about the status of the Indian Union in the Commonwealth of Nations, and, when they asked him if the Union was entitled to go out of it, the author tells us that Sir Stafford told them "Yes, the Dominion will be completely free either to remain within or go without the Commonwealth of Nations." To which the author further adds that "Mr. Amery also said in his speech in the House of Commons on April 20th 1942 that "India would have *de facto* power to secede from the Commonwealth".

Continuance of the British connection was the faith not only of Dadabhai Naoroji and Ranade, but also of Gokhale. Mr. Gandhi's position in this matter is well

great nations of the world, industrially and politically, in religion, in literature, in Science and in Arts. I want all this and feel, at the same time, that the whole of this aspiration can, in essence and reality, be realised within the Empire. The question was one not of dreams, of what was theoretically perfect, but of what was practically attainable. It was further a question also of muscle, and character, of capacity, organisation and sacrifice. The cases of the French in Canada, and of the Boers in South Africa showed that there was room enough in this Empire for a self-respecting India. Some of our friends appalled by the supreme difficulty of their task and under the difficulty that this goal can never be attained, had begun to talk of another goal ever more impossible of attainment. They were like persons who sought to fly from the evils they knew of to those they knew nothing about. The goal of self-government within the Empire involved a minimum of disturbance of existing ideas, and it meant proceeding along lines which we understand, however difficult the progress might be. It would be madness, it would be folly, to throw away in the struggle before us the enormous advantages—the genius of the British people as revealed in their history which made on the whole for political freedom, for constitutional liberty. I am glad to see that one of the leaders of the New Party, Mr. Tilak, had stated in a recent issue of his paper that self-government on colonial lines sufficed him as a thing to work for.”

CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION

Gokhale then proceeded to consider the means by which the goal was to be reached. And the answer he gave is another fundamental of the Liberal tradition. Gokhale first said that he could point out no royal road. But he added, “one thing was certain that the goal being what it was, their reliance must be on what was called constitutional agitation”. The nature and scope of that agitation had been made clear before him by Dadabhai Naoroji in the ever memorable Congress address of 1906. Gokhale, in the lecture we are drawing upon, further dotted its i's and crossed its t's. He

Non-payment of taxes was the most direct, the most effective form of passive resistance, and it had, moreover, the merit of bringing home to each man the responsibility of his own action. If some of those who were talking of employing passive resistance to achieve self-government at the present stage of the country's progress would adopt that form of passive resistance, they would soon find out where they stood and how far they were supported."

In our struggle for freedom and Swaraj we have discovered the truth of the observation that "the short cut proves, in the end, the longest of roads to travel." On this point Sir S. P. Sinha has some wisest words to say. After defining what the people of India wanted from the Government, Lord Sinha continued, "The attainment of the goal, which was government of the people, by the people and for the people, was only by peaceful constitutional methods". And then he said "a free gift of self-government to India was not possible. The English Government would not part with their most cherished dependency in such a cavalier fashion. The second alternative—wresting it from them—appealed most to extremist minds. A serious conflict with the British power was impossible, if not inconceivable. The third alternative was the only feasible one."

As one condition of peaceful advance he demanded of the Government the military training of India, the equipment of Indians with power to defend their hearths and homes against foreign invasion and to maintain internal peace. This had been too long delayed by those who swore that they ruled India in the best interests of India. Until India was able to defend herself, she will not be able to govern herself. That was the essence of Lord Sinha's Congress Presidential address of 1915. And he maintained that neither of these could be postponed or delayed too long,

in time that had spelt disaster all along the road. The plea of unfitness was but one excuse, out of many, not to do in time and gracefully what was needed to keep India happy and contented. One of the deeper causes of Indian unrest was an absolute lack of statesmanship and vision in those who really ruled India. The Liberals have not spared the bureaucrat and the man on the spot for breaking the promises given to India in several charters from 1833 to the advent of the Montagu-Reforms. Extremism in India was born of this persistent delay, indifference, neglect and hauteur on the part of the man on the spot, helped by his ally in that respect—the die-hard in England. And the Indian liberal from the day of Dadabhai Naoroji down to our own times had all along warned the rulers of the greatest blunder they had been committing in the administration of India, treating her as no better than a crown colony. It was Mr. Montagu who had realised fully the peril of the path the bureaucrat was following, and he had no hesitation in condemning the administration under him as a machine, and, on that account, wooden, antedeluvian, and useless even for the efficiency by which the bureaucrat swore so much. So that though, on the one hand, the liberal did not believe in any short cut to the goal, he did not, on the other hand, uphold the doctrine of unfitness as barring the road to progress. What he really meant was that, as Indians, it was neither right nor expedient for us to throw away what had come to us as the result of our own work in the past, simply because it did not take us at one bound into “the promised land.” What we had won by our own labour and agitation, we must use to the full and press for more, profiting by the experience and strength it would give to our hand to fight for more. That was the standpoint not only

tutions can never be realised, it held, till leaders and followers had realised, in every field of national life, that they were Indians first and everything else only afterwards. That was the firm stand of men like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who expressed his faith in the clearest of terms in a famous speech from the Congress platform. He said in 1890 as President of the Congress:

"To my mind a Parsi is a better and truer Parsi, as a Mahomedan or a Hindu is a better and truer Mahomedan or Hindu, the more he is attached to the land that gave him birth, the more he is bound in brotherly relations and affection to all the children of the soil, the more he recognises the fraternity of all the native communities in the country, and the immutable bond which binds them together in the pursuit of common aims and objects under a common Government. Is it possible to imagine that Dadabhai, for instance, true Parsi that he is, is anything but an Indian, living and working all his life for India, with the true and tender loyalty of a son? Can any one doubt, if I may be allowed to take another illustration, that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was greater and nobler when he was devoting the great energies and talents with which he was endowed—if for the benefit of Mahomedans in particular—for the benefit of all Indians in general than when, as of late, he was preaching a gospel of selfishness and isolation? The birthright, therefore, gentlemen, which the Parsis thus possess of so indefeasible and glorious a charter, they have refused and will always refuse to sell for any mess of pottage, however fragrant and tempting. More especially, therefore, as an Indian it is that I return to you my grateful thanks for the honour you have done to me."

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta like all true Congress leaders—and the present-day liberals are heirs to that tradition—always stood by one nation theory in India, and refused to be divided on the ground of community, race and religion in India. He quotes in this address from a famous article contributed at the time to a

Founders



Sir Surendra Nath Banerji
(President 1918)



Sir Dinshaw Wacha



Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer
(President 1919 & 1926)



Sir Yajneswar Chintamani
(President 1920 & 1931)

ONE COUNTRY AND ONE NATION

Liberalism regarded it as national suicide to exploit social and religious differences for fomenting political differences. In more than one address and speech Ranade and Gokhale had pointed out how these differences could be softened and ultimately overcome by fastening attention on public work that brought equal good to all. The latter had started the Servants of India Society in 1905 to promote such work and wipe out differences of caste and creed. It was made a condition of membership in that Society that those who would dedicate themselves to the service of their country must rise above these narrow considerations and set aside all prejudices that divided man from man. No liberal worth the name will ever place his caste, community, Province and race above the nation that is his first interest in public life. He knows not parochial or communal politics such as the Muslim League to-day is found to champion vehemently and proclaim boldly.

The tradition set by the school of political thinkers known as liberals has no use also for propaganda like that of the Hindu Maha Sabha in favour of what it calls Hindudom and Hindu Raj. The stand may be justified, perhaps, as a counter-blast to the propaganda of the Muslim League in favour of separation and Pakistan. But in themselves both are exceedingly harmful and, therefore, unjustifiable looking forward to the Indian Union, or the United States of India, that all of us, as Indians, had envisaged as the promised land.

Sir Syed Ahmed had persuaded the Mussalmans to have nothing to do with the Congress, "preaching to them the gospel of selfishness and isolation." But even he had to admit that the Hindus and the Mussal-

of their religion would be an attempt impolitic enough to be perilous. If the Mahomedans under special and exceptional circumstances require their proper rights to be safeguarded by special measures, the same consideration and the same protection should be afforded to the Hindus under similar circumstances. To leave the Mahomedan majority where it exists unfettered, and to seek to provide checks against the Hindu majority alone, must to the latter appear an act of intolerance on the part of the Government which they are entitled to resent."

And again, that the great and important Mohomedan community should have adequate representation in the Legislative Council and in all public affairs is what the Council of the Presidency Association are prepared to advocate without reserve. They have every sympathy with Mohomedan aspirations and and they feel bound to point out that these aspirations have never been ignored but always have been promoted by the political activities of the Hindu and other communities. Every movement for securing greater rights for the population at large has benefited the Mohomedans no less than other communities, and if the Mahomedans have failed to avail of it at all to the extent that they desire, the result is due to their unfortunate backwardness in taking advantage of the educational facilities provided by Government and not to the selfishness and opposition of the other communities. The memorandum continues:

"There is no injustice in the fact that the Hindu representatives are found in a majority when on any and every secular test they prove themselves entitled to it. To encourage any idea of injustice on that account can serve no honest purpose. It is not honest or fair to the Hindus to attribute their advantage to anything unworthy when the legitimate and solid claims of number, property and education are demonstrably on their side. It is not honest and fair to the Mohomedans to encourage delusive hopes and keep them in darkness as to the true causes of back-

this cancer from the body-politic of India when he could have easily done so at the time. On the other hand, he sheltered himself behind the plea that "the Mohomedans were given special representation with separate electorates in 1909. The Hindus' acquiescence is embodied in the present agreement between the political leaders of the two communities. The Mohomedans regard these as settled facts and any attempt to go back upon them will rouse a storm of bitter protest." Telang often used to say that "a tree was to be judged by its fruit, and results were the beacon-lights of wise men." Judging from 1919 to the end of 1935 and from that day till now, none can say that the tree planted in 1909, and rooted firm in the soil of India in 1919, had not spread its poisonous shade all over India. As a result, responsible government, citizenship, the spirit of give and take, have not only not come into India but are threatened with extinction by the fanaticism of communal spirit and its off-shoot of Pakistan.

The lesson of history on this matter was well learnt by the early leaders of the Congress. They knew and well understood, as few have understood after them, that

"it was only when the territorial principle had vanquished the tribal principle, and blood and religion had ceased to assert a rival claim with the State to a citizen's allegiance, and when an effective sense of common interests had developed in a country, that beginning could be made of what was responsible government,"

and again that "representative government and self-government became a travesty where representation meant the interest of a community in preference to the country, and self-government meant the exaltation of the self at the expense of others."

Justice Telang had pointed out as early as 1889

The career in India of Lord Lytton and his measures to gag the Vernacular Press in India gave the Indian leaders the first occasion to express their clearest opinion on the question. Telang wrote at that time a series of articles in the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay pointing out the inequity and arbitrariness of these measures. And later on he wrote in the Sarwajanik Sabha Journal of Poona a comprehensive survey of all the enactments of the time to prove how "the reign of law" in British India was being supplanted by what he called "personal rule," meaning by the last phrase enactments that vested excessive power in the executive to do what it liked with the liberties of the people. "This was a change detrimental to the fair reputation of the rulers and not, by any means, calculated to promote that contentment in India which the Proclamation of 1858 had declared to be the foundation of British rule in India."

Later on, as national life had shown itself in a more organised form, the leaders of the Congress clarified the matter still further and laid down the limits of law and order on the one hand, and of popular agitation on the other. The liberal tradition went so far as to agree with the Government that the executive had a right to arm itself with powers if there were in the country "a native and widespread movement of resistance to authority," and if there were "open breaches of the public peace." But it asserted, on the other hand, that no Government was justified in taking and using such powers beyond their clearly defined and restricted scope and aim, in the name of law and order, in the name of peace and good government. Such a policy on the part of the rulers, as one writer pointedly remarks "often converted prison-houses into seats of martyrdom." The Government may succeed

All people do not always denounce what they do not approve. Moreover, with us there is an additional reason. We do not want to make confusion worse confounded. There are always enough divisions, in all conscience, in the country, and we do not want to have a fresh cause of contention if we can help it. But let me say this to the Hon. Member, whether the Moderates remain silent or denounce the Extremists, it will make little difference in the hold which the Extremists are acquiring on certain minds in India. There is only one way in which the wings of disaffection can be clipped, and that is by the Government pursuing a policy of steady and courageous conciliation."

He then referred in the same speech to the real cause of sedition in the country, and, by implication, told the authorities why it was that extremism had such a hold on certain minds in the country. He said appealing to Lord Minto who was then the Viceroy of India,

"I will take sedition in the sense in which it is used by the third class and I will say this, that if such sedition has come into existence it is comparatively a recent growth, a matter of the last three or four years only—and the responsibility for it rests, mainly if not entirely, on the Government or rather on the official class. My Lord, from 1885 that is, since the close of the beneficent Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, the Congress has been endeavouring to secure much needed reform in the administration. The present form of administration is fifty years old. We have long outgrown that now, and the fact is admitted even by officials. But while they admit, in a general sort of way, that changes are necessary, they have some objection or other to urge against every change that is proposed. The result is there has been hardly any movement forward, in spite of all our efforts these years, and the patience of the more impatient among the country has at least begun to give way."

"In the earlier years of the Congress," Gokhale continued, "there used to be some room for a hope that the desired changes in the administration would come." After Lord Ripon came Lord Dufferin who

of the "Moderates" while there was time. And now, when the mischief has been done, the Hon. Member turns round and wants to throw the responsibility of what has happened upon us."

This long passage gives us a correct insight into the bureaucratic mind, and into the cult of "efficiency run mad," as also it explains the dwindling influence of sane opinion in the country. It has been the eternal riddle of reactionary policy, put in the words used against it by Telang when he criticised the policy of Lord Lytton: "Men will not when they can, and cannot when they will." At the conclusion of his speech Gokhale gave the government a warning which deserves to be reproduced here. He told Lord Minto who had succeeded Lord Curzon,

"My Lord, if the present estrangement between the Government and the people of Bengal is allowed to continue, ten years hence there will not be one man in a thousand in that province who has a kindly feeling for an Englishman. The Government will have on their hand a tremendous problem, for there are thirty-three millions of Bengalees and the unwisdom and danger of driving discontent underground amidst such a population will then be obvious."

In the Budget speech of 1906 Gokhale again returned to the charge and concluded his observations in the following words:

"What the country needs at the present moment above everything else is a Government national in spirit, a government that will enable us to feel that our interests are the first consideration with it, and that our wishes and opinions are to it a matter of some account." In the Budget speech of 1907 he dealt with the same subject and told the new Viceroy plainly what were the obstacles in the way. "Thus we move round and round the fortress of official conservatism and bureaucratic reluctance to part with power without being able to effect a breach at any point. Mr Lord, this kind of thing has gone on for many years, with the result that the attitude of the public mind

pharse used by Pandit Motilal Nehru who was in temperament and outlook a liberal. In 1907 he was certainly a "moderate and liberal" and not an extremist. But the liberals since 1918 and, before that date as their record shows, have always regarded the country greater than their party. The liberal tradition may have fallen on bad times at present, because if one may so put it, the anarch is abroad, and people are swayed by mere sentiment. So long as this state of things continues, that tradition will not regain its hold on the public mind. But so soon as the tide turns, as it is bound to turn at long last, the tradition will reassert itself, and the work of the liberals will be found in retrospect to be full of vision, courage, practical insight and wisdom.

Bound up with a party stronger in number, better consolidated and better functioning, the liberal tradition will be applied with fruitfulness to every problem of reconstruction in self-governing India. That has been the lesson of history in the past, and that is the beacon-light of hope for the future. In the present it is content to work, as Mr. Gandhi put it about himself in 1924, "in the wilderness of minority." While the past is a burden, said one of the greatest philosophic historian of our age, "the proper knowledge of the past is an emancipation."

What India needs is not only freedom or emancipation from the thralldom of the past, but also saving itself from all nostrums and panaceas, whether old or new. And liberalism will teach her to be rid of both. While the East and the West are fusing in a furnace from which a new world will arise, the process must needs throw up sparks of fire. But that is, after all, a temporary phase, and when readjustment comes, and old party labels disappear, liberalism will penetrate the new, as it had shaped in the past "the

CHAPTER II

RE-ORIENTATION

The first Session of any new party is always a function of great importance, in that it defines the policy of the party and outlines its method of work. The liberal party in India began with its first session in Bombay on November 1st and 2nd, 1918. Though, at the time, it was styled as "All India Conference of the Moderate Party," it proved to be the nucleus of the National Liberal Federation of India, by which it has come to be known in after years.

THE OCCASION

Considering the time in which it was held—there was the influenza epidemic raging throughout the country in that month—the session was a great success—success, in a sense, in point of numbers; but, more so, in the sense of its deliberations, and the weight behind them of persons who had shaped them. The times were critical, both in India and England, and the Conference had to steer, as regards the coming reforms, clear between rejectionists on the one hand, and reactionaries on the other. Extremes, they say, not seldom, meet and make strange bed-fellows. And had it not been for the combined efforts of the sane elements throughout the country, the Montagu Scheme would certainly have been shelved, if not sabotaged, by the activities of the diehards and reactionaries in England led by men of the type of Lord Sydenham, an ex-governor of Bombay with his Indo-

the Government of India Bill, based on the Joint Report, had been introduced in British House of Commons in April 1919,

"Mrs. Besant had begun to take a more favourable view of the Montagu Scheme than she had done in the preceding year, and the Home Rule League deputation led by her and Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer worked in closer association with the Liberal Deputation in England, which co-operation on their part met with a huge amount of success, and helped to improve the Bill into an Act acceptable to Indian Nationalists to the farthest extent possible under the circumstances."

What were the circumstances that had helped to make the Government of India Bill of 1919 so disappointing? That had been told, by anticipation as it were, in the presidential speech of Surendra Nath Bannerjea. He said,

"the recommendations had to run the gauntlet of Parliamentary criticism and be acceptable to the great British Democracy. Say what you will, the English people are essentially conservative in their character and temperament. Behind the radicalism of the most radical, there is an underlying vein of caution which Imperial Responsibilities have imposed upon the national character."

Besides, the British cabinet, then, happened to be a coalition government consisting of statesmen belonging to different parties. Men like Lord Curzon in it were out-and-out opponents of any devolution of power to India. And there were in the country die-hards like Lord Sydenham who posed as protectors of the masses and of the backward classes as against the educated classes in India who were the natural leaders of the people. All these circumstances, added to the opposition in India led by the Indian National Congress, had their adverse effect on the recommendations in the Montagu Report, while they were in the stage of being sent up before the Commons in the shape of a Bill.

the separate conference held by the so-called moderates to give their whole-hearted support to the Montagu Reforms as embodied in the Report.

NO CHANGE OF TRADITION

The Conference of the Moderates was, in no sense, a departure from the line of action laid down by the Indian National Congress. Rather it was a vindication of the Congress ideal as against the new departure thrust upon that institution by, what may be called, its left-wing. Both the Chairman of the Reception Committee Sir Dinsha Wacha, and the President of the Conference, Surendranath Bannerjea, made that position clear in their respective addresses. "All or nothing" was not the motto of the Indian National Congress, said Sir Dinsha Wacha, and in support of that statement quoted the words of Charles Bradlaugh who had attended the Congress session of 1889 in Bombay along with Sir William Wedderburn, than whom India had no better friend in the English official world. The words were:

"Not only do not expect too much, but do not expect all at once. Don't be disappointed if, of a just claim, only something is conceded."

And these words were uttered by Mr. Bradlaugh when he had taken upon himself to introduce a bill in the House of Commons on the lines of the Reforms Scheme, the broad outlines of which the Congress itself had formulated. It is enough to state here that Charles Bradlaugh was a radical of radicals in English politics, and, at one time, a co-worker in England with Mrs. Besant on behalf of the common people in that country.

Another quotation that Sir Dinsha Wacha gave in his address was from the speech of A. O. Hume at Allahabad in 1886 :

Mehta, Sir William Wedderburn and others had been spared to us to lead and guide our counsels, they would have welcomed with alacrity the Reform Proposals as laid down by His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for India, subject, of course, to necessary improvements. They are in conformity with the principles laid down by the great Congressmen of the past whose memories we venerate and whose precepts are our guide."

"THE CENTRE GROUP"

The so-called Moderates separated themselves from the old Congress in vindication of its time-honoured policy and line of action. They did so as liberals because they thought honestly that the Congress had drifted into a position, when, as the President put it, "no useful purpose could be served by a patched-up truce." For the designation—Congressman—"had become emptied of all contents, and remained only an impressive nickname with no recognisable meaning in real things and political acts—a bottle with a bit of old label, but with no inspring liquor left." The Congress, in the hands of its latest masters, said Surendra Nath Banerjea, had ceased to be "representative of the sentiments and principles before which national rivalries disappear." The function of the Congress was not to raise the cry of negation in season and out of season. It was, indeed, to hold its own against "the reactionary right and the revolutionary left," to constitute itself as the guide of public opinion, as "centre group, the focus, the starting point of all national political activities, standing between the extreme views of reactionaries on the one hand, and of thoughtless and reckless reformers on the other, seeking to guide, control and regulate them, and to lead them on into useful and fructifying channels, in conformity with our environments and the high ends of national progress."

reject the proposed reforms in toto." The deliberations of the Conference surveyed the scheme in all its details, first as regards the Provinces and then as regards the Central Government. It suggested that the principle of responsibility should be introduced in the Centre simultaneously with its introduction in provincial governments. If the method and the measure of that introduction was to be diarchy in the provinces it should operate *pari-passu* with diarchy in the Centre. And it showed what subjects could be transferred in the Centre with ministers in charge of them, without weakening the Centre, or divesting it of authority for proper control and regulated working of the reforms in the Provinces.

Years ago Sir Pherozshah Mehta in criticising the proposed Minto-Morley reforms had maintained that to invest the provinces with responsibility without a corresponding responsibility in the Centre, was to make the reforms ineffective, if not nugatory. And eight years after that statement, it was perceived by Mr. Montagu himself that a clear departure had to be made from the principle involved in the Minto-Morley Reforms if India was to be definitely started on the road to responsible self-government. Hence the declaration of 1917, and the Report framing the Scheme that was intended as the first step on that journey.

Diarchy was adopted by Mr. Montagu more as a matter of caution than as an indication of mistrust, as the reader might know for himself from a passage in his diary in which he maintained that "Indians were not to be treated as school boys to be promoted from form to form according as the Masters would decide upon their advance." This is a clear proof of Mr. Montagu's intention in the preamble to the Act of 1919, as regards both time and the terms put in it. It was misconstrued later by his suc-



Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri
(President 1922)



Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru
(President 1923 & 1927)



Sir Raghunath Paranjpye
(President 1924 & 1939)



Sir Chimanlal Setalvad
(President 1928 & 1937)

Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme has, in point of fact, embodied, wholly or substantially, 26 of the Congress demands, it has deviated from the Congress-League Scheme in two particulars only, with the result that while it has avoided the defects of that Scheme, it has formulated, in so far as provincial reconstruction and progress are concerned, proposals which are unquestionably superior in conception and design to the Congress-League framework. If that is the conclusion which any unprejudiced man—without any bias one way or the other—would arrive at, I ask what is his duty? Is it his duty to stick to the inferior Congress-League Scheme and give up or reject a superior Scheme?"

What the fundamental difference was between the Scheme sponsored by the Congress and the Muslim League and the Scheme presented in the Montagu Report, was well brought out in the presidential speech of Surendra Nath Bannerjee. He said that the Congress-League Scheme was framed before the announcement of 20th August 1917. It did not and could not deal with the new situation created by the message of the 20th August. There was mention in it of responsible government. The great message dealt wholly and solely with responsible government and provided for progressive stages. The Congress-League Scheme created, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*, a directorate with an executive subordinate to the Legislature but not removable at its pleasure. It created opportunities for full, free criticism, but did not provide for responsibility.

"We take our stand on the basic pledge of the 20th August, and our suggestions for the modification and the expansion of the Scheme are in entire conformity with the spirit and essence of the great pledge, not seeking to tamper with it or to go beyond it, but to keep within its broad and beneficent lines. We recognise that no private bill has, in these days, any chance in Parliament. Here is our chance, our only chance, which has occurred after ceaseless and strenuous effort extending over the life-time of a generation by the illustrious of our men, and the

"Whatever I consider to be right according to my lights and according to my reason, I will say freely, frankly and fearlessly to Government and the public. Whether it pleases them or not, is not my concern. What is good to them I will administer, however unpalatable the dose may be."

Throughout the years from 1920 to 1943, the liberal party has acted up to this principle. It has not flattered the Congress; it has not criticised it simply to spite it; it has not said aught in malice or for the sake of personal triumph. It has acted all along according to its lights and according to the dictates of reason and conscience. On the other hand, it has never failed to say the truth, however harsh it may be, to the Government, as time and occasion, and a clear sense of duty had demanded the telling of it, and only for the vindication of what had appealed to it as the wisest course to follow. There are liberals in the country who, for the time being, do not wear the label. And they have all along striven honestly and courageously, to keep their countrymen, as Lord Morley puts it, "on the path of wise politics." The party does not mind very much, if, occasionally, a vehement communalist leader chooses to dub the distinguished men of the party "as leaders without followers." In the very nature of their situation it was not for them "to arouse swelling waves of emotion in the masses or to evolve a technique of organisation full of colour, publicity and picturesqueness." But not even their worst political opponents—not enemies—can say of them that they had not said what they meant, or had not meant what they said.

The Liberal Conference of 1918 and its attitude to the Montagu Scheme of Reforms, had their desired effect on the country as a whole, not excluding the Congress itself. Mr. Tilak soon announced the policy

CHAPTER III

REFORMS AND PUNJAB DISTURBANCES

It was in the Second Session of the All-India Moderates' Conference held in Calcutta at the end of 1919, that the president, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, whom Surendra Nath Bannerjea described as "the brain of the liberals in Madras," suggested that the name "National Liberals," instead of "Moderates" or "the Centre group" should be adopted by the new party and the Conference be called accordingly. The suggestion seems to have been taken up by the Conference, as the next session of the Conference was held at Madras as the Third Session of the National Liberal Federation of India.

The work done in England in connection with the coming reforms by the liberal deputation under the leadership of Surendra Nath Bannerjea, contributed, in no small measure, to improve the Reforms Bill introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Montagu. The reactionaries in England and India had succeeded in making the Bill a travesty of the Report on which it was supposed to be based. If the Act was much better than the Bill, it was due to the evidence given by the deputation before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Mr. Montagu and Lord Sinha were able to convince other members of the Committee on the strength of that evidence that the final shape of the Reforms must be different from that envisaged in the

cluded that they were a decided advance on the old order of things that had continued since 1909, which year saw the inauguration of the Minto-Morley Reforms. The right to the legislatures to elect their own presidents after the first term of the new elections, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, was a new and desirable departure. The House thereby would be enabled, maintained Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, to build up its own procedure for conducting business and for the expression of its own views, without let or hindrance, on any subject that it considered of vital importance to the country. In the Bombay Council under the Act of 1919, its first president, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, guided its deliberations, and established procedure and conventions, following, in that respect, the model of the Speaker in the British House of Commons. Sir Fredrick White in the Central Assembly also worked in a similar spirit. In Madras Lord Willingdon sought, and very much succeeded in working diarchy on the plan of joint and collective responsibility. He minimised the difference between the reserved and the transferred departments, and between the executive Councillors and the ministers under him, in the administration of his Province, to the point of attenuation. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar started right tradition about the privileges of the House. He regulated procedure and introduced conventions based on his deep study of Sir Erskine May and of the pages of Hansard, which study, later on, as we have good reason to say so, was of immense help to the first elected president of the Central Assembly, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, in shaping his own conduct in the Chair.

The next point in the address of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer was that fiscal autonomy was sure to arrive in India in the wake of the new Reforms Act. It would

be given here. One Congress paper described the Act "as a colossal sham calculated to perpetuate our unmitigated probation under the British rule as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The reforms do not vouchsafe a particle of hope and they fail to transfer an iota of real responsibility to the people of India." "The leader of the Congress Deputation from Madras," says Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, "expressed the hope that the people of India would with one voice vote against the Reform Scheme at the next meeting of the Indian National Congress." This gentleman was no other than Mr. V. P. Madhavrao. Sir Sivaswami Aiyer quotes Mr. V. P. Madhavrao to say that "Indians required no training in the art of government, that the bill was no improvement on the existing state of things, and that if it did anything, it increased the powers of the autocracy." Another critic, quoted by the Conference President opined that "it would not be a national disaster, if by the mutation of party conflict in the House of Commons the present cabinet went down and with it the present Reform Bill." This criticism was dismissed by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer as a specimen of "intellectual obliquity."

As against this off-hand, hasty and irresponsible, if not mischievous, set of opinions, he gives us in his address opinions of persons who were inspired by a sense of patriotism in no way inferior to that of the extremists in India, and whose power to judge was "beyond any question." They were men like Lord Sinha, Sir Shankaran Nair, Sir M. Visvesvaraya, Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu and H. H. the Aga Khan among Indians, and men like Mr. Polak, Sir Michael Sadler, Sir Stanley Reed, Lord Crewe, Major Ormsby Gore, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Ben Spoor among the Britishers. They all styled the new Act "as the most epoch-making and remarkable advance

ourselves to quote here what Mr. Gandhi himself said about his Satyagraha at that time. He wrote "As all these things have happened in my name, I am ashamed of them and those who have been responsible for them have, thereby, not honoured me but disgraced me. A rapier run through my body could hardly have pained me more. I have said times without number that Satyagraha admits of no violence, no pillage, no incendiarism, and still in the name of Satyagraha we have burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people, and plundered shops and private houses. If deeds such as these could save me from the prison or the scaffold, I should not like to be saved. It seems that the deeds I have complained of, have been done in an organised manner. There seems to be a definite design and I am sure that there must be some educated and clever man or men behind them."

This was written by Mr. Gandhi to Mr. C. F. Andrews in 1919, and as we read the passage today, we cannot help rubbing our eyes in doubt if the deeds described in it were done in 1919, or in the year 1942, that is, after the resolution dated 8th August—now famous as 'Quit India' resolution. By the way, it was at this time that Mr. Gandhi first made use of the phrase—Himalayan miscalculation—a phrase he has used so often since, typifying his misjudgment of men and things.

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer suggested some remedies to avoid repetition of such incidents. He proposed "that in dealing with internal outbreaks the civil authorities should only invoke the aid of military forces but should not allow the introduction of martial law. "This suggestion" he continued "raises a very large issue and in view of the incidents of Martial

such things in the future, and finally, he pressed for the abolition of flogging in the Indian Army. The Hunter Committee published its report in due time, with a minority report by Indians on that Committee. There followed a debate on it in the House of Commons, General Dyer was asked to resign his office, but no steps were taken against officials and authorities of the kind suggested in the presidential address, steps which, as he put it, voiced the wishes of the people; and which were due to them in all fairness and justice, and for their appeasement. The House of Lords practically undid what little the Commons had done to bring to book General Dyer, and, as if to spite the people of India, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, no other than Sir Michael O'Dwyer, was appointed the Chairman of the Army Committee appointed to investigate into the matter of reform and reorganisation of the Indian Army.

We draw the attention of the reader to certain observations made on this matter by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in the same Conference. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru condemned in unmistakable language the excesses of the mob all over the country in connection with the Satyagraha movement launched by Mr. Gandhi as a national protest against the Rowlatt Act. He said "None of us can have the least sympathy, in any shape or form, with outrages of that character, and they must be greatly mistaken who think that the freedom of any country can be achieved by murders and assassinations." But he continued that "he must condemn in equally strong terms what happened in the Punjab subsequent to the actions of the mob." The excesses of officials in the Punjab were committed, it has to be remembered, in the name of law and order. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru remarked in this connection that "things were done at Amritsar, Kasur, Lahore

in exposing the ill-advised nature of the first, the dangerous possibilities of the second, and the crowning horror of the third which no subsequent palliative could ever erase from the memory of the Indian people. The happenings were unfortunate for the reason that they synchronised with a large and liberal measure of radical reform in the government of the country, and lent support from the popular side to the non-co-operation movement that was hit upon to bring the Government down on its knees.

THE LIBERAL PARTY

About the liberal party and its attitude to the Congress at that time Sir Sivaswami said "our party, many of us feel, is in the minority in the country. At any rate the vocal strength of our party is in the minority. One thing, however, I feel sure of and that is that it is not possible for any nation to continue in a transport of excitement, or to continue to guide its conduct and policy by the dictates of passion, prejudice or by want of sobriety. Sobriety and judgment are bound in the long run to rule the world. It may be that we feel discouraged at times by the fact that we are not able to muster in thousands as the members of the other party claim, but let not that depress us in the least. I cannot help believing that responsibility and sober judgment must assert their influence in the affairs of the nation. If we go about our work with enthusiasm, and if our enthusiasm is reflected and others are fired with the same enthusiasm, we are bound to succeed."

Mr. C. Y. Chintamani spoke on the subject when he proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Sivaswami Aiyer. The point that he made was "that it was in no spirit of antagonism or rivalry to any other party in the country that the liberals had constituted themselves into a separate organisation. The good of the country

CHAPTER IV

NON-COOPERATION

The year 1920 was a year that saw a swing in the public mind from the path of constitutional agitation to the path of non-co-operation. There was no particular reason why it should so happen except the fact that the oldest and the most widely loved of political organisations had come under the influence of Mr. Gandhi. Amritsar, Calcutta, Nagpur—the Sessions of the Congress held successively at these places had witnessed the rising power of Mr. Gandhi. They were characterised by a decreasing sense of sanity and moderation and an increasing power of what Burke has called ‘dissidence of dissent.’ and “the extreme of extremism.” By the end of the year, at Nagpur, and after the death of Mr. Tilak on August 1st 1920, no powerful opposition was left in the Congress to stay Mr. Gandhi’s hand and to stave off non-co-operation. Even Mr. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru had completely gone under.

What change the politics of the country had undergone as the result of this hysteria of sentiment has been made clear to us in a letter which Hon. Mr. Shastri wrote to his friends and colleagues at the end of the year to explain the whole situation and, if possible, to bring together those who thought differently from the Congress on the vital issue of non-co-operation and mass action.

THE PERIL

The Liberal Federation met at Madras at the end of that year, and the one subject that occupied its

slightest abatement, and certain principal leaders among them have declared a partiality for the policy of obstruction and deadlock hoping that the British Government would grant India full Swaraj, as the only means of getting over the impasse."

"As if these causes of division were not sufficient, a campaign had been started, for which the sanction of the Congress will be sought and in all probability will be given, to discredit and boycott those liberals and others who had been elected to the new legislatures by the first exercise of a wide and direct franchise. The sum total of these differences had made reconciliation and united work impossible. The wisest course in the circumstances was to maintain the purity of our principles and our complete freedom of action. If the members kept the generous flag of liberalism flying, a large and influential party will gather round it in no time."

This appeal shows clearly which way the wind was blowing in the country, and how it was impossible for any individual or party to check its fury, till the storm had broken and died down of itself, and people had realised the wreckage it had left behind. As the report of the Reception Committee of the Madras Conference noted it, the result of this appeal was amply evidenced in the success of the Session which was largely attended by leading liberals from different provinces besides a strong contingent of Madras delegates who, as might be expected, formed a considerable body of them. Mrs. Besant and her colleagues of the National Home Rule League joined the Reception Committee and participated in the proceedings of the Federation.

OUR GRIEVANCES

The Madras Session of the Federation was presided over by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. The news had

without these irritants," and naturally these made one ask what was the practical value of the Declaration of 1917 if the constitution of the army in India was to be what the Esher Committee had recommended, (8) the rules made under the Government of India Act were none too favourable to the advance of India to responsible government and about them no important suggestion made by any non-official body were deemed worthy of acceptance by Government. These rules had the effect of counteracting the principle and policy of the Act, as it was moulded by Mr. Montagu in the Committee stages of the Bill and accepted finally by Parliament; (9) no action had been taken to constitute a territorial force; (10); King's commissions granted to Indians were few and far between; (11) treatment of Indians in Kenya, Tanganyika and Fiji was not consistent with the declaration that the Indians are King's equal subjects with those in Africa and elsewhere."

This summary of the principal political happenings in 1920 was illustrative and not exhaustive. It showed that the action of the Government was far from conducive to the creation of opinion in its favour, and it was not calculated to foster belief that there was a genuine desire on the part of the Government to act in the spirit of the new reforms and of the Royal Proclamation that had heralded them. Nor was it in any way helpful to accelerate India's political progress and economic development. After narrating these facts Mr. Chintamani turned round upon the critics who had said that the liberals were lethargic, inasmuch as they could not control the extremism rampant in their midst. And he answered, "our critics forget that extremism is the direct product of the policy of the Government, and the unpopularity of the liberals is in reality the expression of the public distrust of

ed reforms in the administration, military no less than civil, are the only means by which we can hope to achieve success. They may be commonplace and unheroic, there may be nothing about them to catch the fancy, they are certainly old-fashioned and not novel or sensational. But originality in politics is not always a merit and not everything that is new is good."

To those, however, who were impatient for immediate Swaraj, he added,

"I must frankly admit that our well-tryed method offers no hope. Let there be no make-believe or self-deception : Let us call things by their proper names. Immediate Swaraj is an euphemism for revolution. And revolution cannot be accompanied by appeals to constituted authorities. But non-co-operation cannot achieve it either. I have a constitutional aversion for prophesying, which Mr. Balfour has described as the most superfluous form of error, while according to Sir Charles Dilke political prophecy is the most futile of all prophecies. But not even Macaulay's school boy runs any risk in venturing the prediction that non-co-operation will not bring about the wished for revolution. To those into whose soul the iron has entered and who have worked themselves into the conviction that any state of existence would be better than life under this government, the only path that is open is armed revolt. If they think they can, if they feel they must, let them go forward and risk it. I will deplore their folly but will respect their courage and straightforwardness. But to desist from such a course of action and, at the same time, to denounce constitutional agitation as another name for mendicancy, while you go on stirring up feeling and undermining respect for law and authority among the masses who have not developed an intelligent understanding, is, I confess, beyond my poor comprehension on any assumption that does not savour of uncharitableness. Whether such persons adopt Mr. Gandhi's programme or more modestly content themselves with the acceptance of 'the principle of non-co-operation,' the while releasing their surcharged feeling by the denunciation of us liberals, so dear to the heart of a species of extremist publicists, they equally mislead themselves and their hearers and followers, and only act as clogs in the

It is, indeed, very interesting to note here that Mr. Jayakar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who, at the time, seemed to be in the opposite camp, later on came together as allies, and that Mr. Jinnah who was then a thorough-going nationalist opposed to non-cooperation had, during the lapse of years, become a communalist leader of vehemence, short-sightedness and pugnacity which characterise Gandhi's attitude to any question of the moment. As the lamp of reason burns very dim in the case of Mr. Gandhi, so does it now with Mr. Jinnah, and both seem to have parted company, long ago, with what is called wise politics. But the mass mind and the leaders in the second rank of Congress politics were so much obsessed with Mr. Gandhi's satyagraha as a panacea for all evils, and he was so much looked up to as a worker of miracles, that no work that others could do to educate the country against his cult, had proved, since then, of any use.

That is one of the reasons why, even though the Congress had blundered from year to year, and through two decades and more, since Mr. Gandhi has been at the helm of its affairs, the people simply refuse to think and look the other way about. Communal politics and revolutionary politics between themselves have monopolised the political field in India, and all else has suffered on that account. The Government is neither weakened nor brought down. Bureaucracy has become all powerful and the country in its effort to grasp all, has lost all. They swear by the tremendous awakening among the people that the new movement has brought about. But what has been the fruit of it all? Whither has it led us? What rights have we won? How are we taught better to work for unity? Where is the result of the much vaunted constructive programme? And what about the reforms granted to

Punjab tragedy should be part of the cause for non-co-operation. Also at that meeting the Reform Act was discussed and the Hunter Report was brought in, so that we went out then with three things against which non-co-operation was to be used as a weapon, namely, the Khilafat, the Punjab tragedy and the Hunter Report."

Then came what Mr. Gandhi called a War Council in Bombay, whose orders were to be implicitly obeyed. The boycott of Councils and Law Courts were added to the original programme as also the boycott of Schools and Colleges. About the carrying out of these items Mrs. Besant made the following pertinent observation. "No one, apparently, was prepared to obey the whole programme, unkind people outside said that every member wanted other people to sacrifice what they had, and encouraged them to do it, while he himself was not prepared to sacrifice anything. Lawyers took one view, people with posts took other views, and it was a scramble not to make sacrifices but to purify the nation by sacrifice of others." No one should go into the Councils, that was Mr. Gandhi's plan and that was carried. And yet the Councils had been filled and members were getting ready for their work. Mrs. Besant observed on it, "for the next three years that part of the programme cannot come again to the front. It has led to one bad result."

What was that bad result?:

"Some people who would have been very useful had been shut out. The liberal party had suffered from the absence of extremists, for with both in the Councils and working together, more reforms would have come in as the result of moral pressure, for then Government would have been compelled to yield to reasonable demands as against extremist opposition and the country would have benefitted."

What happened now? Had they succeeded by the boycott in paralysing the Government? Mr. Gandhi had definitely said, "Let us remember that the whole of

did not materialise, and the few that had materialised did not survive, and the student world suffered in education, suffered in status, and suffered in future careers and useful work for their country. This part of the programme was never taken up again in Mr. Gandhi's future experiments in Swaraj for India, so he knew that it would never succeed, even as little, if at all, as other items seemed to have succeeded. Similar was the case with the item of the boycott of foreign cloth. The fact was as clear as day light, and one need not go into statistics of import and export to prove what was so patent.

THE SECRET OF ITS HOLD

What was then the explanation of the popularity of non-co-operation in the years 1920 and 1921? According to Mrs. Besant the explanation of the popularity of the movement of non-co-operation was that people felt helpless and desperate. They felt that they had been insulted, humiliated and wronged in their manhood, and injured in every sense of self-respect. The anger was a fair and righteous anger against the Government, against the British nation, and Mr. Gandhi had given a channel for that anger. That was why the movement seemed so strong. The movement said to the Government, to the English, 'I am disgusted with you. I hate you. I do not want to do anything with you, you get away from me.'

In that moment of despair, in that feeling of helplessness, with the sense of wrong which they could not redress, Non-co-operation came before the people and the people rushed through it because it was the expression of their anger, and the desire to defend their motherland against such wrongs in the future. Mrs. Besant concluded

"So this resolution blames the Government as we have a right to blame it, and we have a right to ask it to do

he was promised in return full provincial autonomy. But he did not agree. In the event we know what happened in the Moplah territory of Malabar, in Bombay, and at Chauri Chaura. The Swaraj that was coming, whatever it meant, began to stink in the nostrils of the Mahatma. Government had not helped, Gandhi would not listen, and the communalist had risen to the top. In consequence politics in India has meant all along a series of deadlocks and *impasses*, to the great joy of the reactionary and the die-hard in England; and to the great sorrow of those who would go forward by following the golden mean.

those who had suffered in the tragedy at Amritsar, and gave them what redress he could, in the circumstances of the situation. But he could do no more as regards the punishment of the principal author of the tragedy at Jallianwalla Bagh, as the House of Lords had made a dead-set against it, and, further, if the question of doing away with the pension of General Dyer, which was paid from the British Exchequer, were to be reopened in the House of Commons, that House would not pass it.

The third matter was that of Swaraj. There, Lord Reading was willing to come to terms, through a Round Table Conference, and to start the Provinces on full autonomy. But Mr. Gandhi had torpedoed the proposal, and had, later, decided at Ahmedabad on a campaign of civil disobedience to begin in the early months of 1922.

The Liberal Federation's Session at Allahabad at the end of 1921 discussed civil disobedience, the political situation prior to it, as also the question of self-government in the light of the resolution adopted on it by the Imperial Legislative Assembly. There was a little breeze at the Conference over its resolution on the political situation in the country; there was wisdom and judicious balance of mind in its exposition of a further step in responsible government; and there was measured yet firm criticism on the proposed campaign of mass civil disobedience. Round the question of political advance, the Session also discussed Government's policy about the Indianisation of the Services, of the Army, and of the equipment of Indians for the defence of their own country. In the Assembly itself Sir Sivaswami Aiyer had made the question his own as we know from the resolutions he had moved on Esher Committee's Report, and, later, by the work he had done on the sub-com-

the policy of Sir Harcourt Butler in the United Provinces in putting down the Congress and the Khilafat organisations of volunteers by application to that Province of the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

He maintained that the non-co-operation movement had almost petered out because the Government of India so far had ignored it. The wholesale ban on volunteers had given the leaders just the atmosphere they had needed to start the civil disobedience movement. The Government of Lord Reading had behaved till then with infinite patience and wisdom letting the ordinary law to have its own course against offenders. But the Bombay Riots had upset the balance, what was called "repression" had begun in full force, and, as a result, there were hartals at Allahabad and other places, on the arrival of the Prince of Wales in their midst. That was the contention of Pandit Hirdayanath Kunzru in his address at the Conference as Chairman of its Reception Committee. And the same argument he reiterated almost, in his speech on the political situation when he supported the resolution of the Conference on that subject.

THE OTHER SIDE OF IT

The President of the Conference used words on the occasion which deserve to be quoted here. He said,

"The course taken by the Government has this element of weakness in it that it offers a premium to persons anxious to be in the limelight. When some are arrested more come in. The gaol is considered the place of freedom. No heroic measures can be suggested on either side. The arrest of men of great respectability and of unimpeachable character like Lala Lajpatrai, Mr. C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Babu Bhagwandas cannot be contemplated without feelings of the very deepest regret. The extension of the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law

alluded to this debate because it shows how a full and frank expression of individual opinion was not debarred in the discussion, and that there was not at the Conference the slightest indication of mere registration of a Decree fixed beforehand, or a fiat from a man however big, to be meekly accepted by the rest.

During this hot debate, Mr. Kamat of Poona struck a note of appeal to the Government as follows: "My own reading of the situation tells me that if they had not been in a state of panic, things in the Congress would not have been where they are to-day." Confident in his belief that intimidation left to itself would not have led to violence, Mr. Kamat continued. "If such a situation arises, certainly all law-abiding citizens, shall be the first to go to the Government of India and say 'Now the situation is out of hand; and we on behalf of the country urge the Government to adopt such measures as shall put down the movement.'" Now, this was certainly a counsel of perfection so easy to give but so hard to follow. The answer to it was Chauri-Chaura in the Gorakhpur District of the United Provinces. As Mr. Chintamani has poignantly noted, "In the Gorakhpur divisions no action had been taken under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Commissioner took pride in the fact that he had been able to keep the peace in all his three districts without recourse to any special law, and he had advised the Government to withdraw the Notification under the Criminal Law Amendment Act from the whole of his division. What must have been his mortification to find but six or seven days later Chauri Chaura confounded him with a vengeance!—And who did it? The volunteers of the Congress pledged to non-violence?"

About the Round Table Conference proposed by Lord Reading and with which Mr. Gandhi would have

ther, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said, "The Congress has now resolved to adopt the item as part of its programme. Mr. Gandhi has declared openly that Civil Disobedience is merely a substitute for armed rebellion."

"There was no question as to the object of this item in the programme," continued Sir Sivaswami :

"It is for the purpose of declaring war against Government, of rebelling against Government that civil disobedience has been proposed. As regards the methods they have been said to be peaceful. There can be no doubt that Civil Disobedience involves the breaking of the law and the defiance of authority. The necessary result of this policy will be to defy the Government and paralyse it. All that must necessarily result in great suffering and misery to the people. If you deliberately break the law, the Government cannot keep quiet if it is to deserve the name of Government. And if the Government is to maintain law and order, if it has to maintain its authority, it must necessarily punish those who have been guilty of the breaches of the law. The result will be that by inducing hundreds and thousands, if not more, to bring upon themselves that punishment which is the inevitable consequence of collision with law and authority, you will be producing a state of excitement in the country which will not possibly allow them to adhere to the policy of non-violence."

And then he referred to Muslim reaction to the movement. He said:

"Let me just refer to some of the utterances of the Mohommedan followers of Mr. Gandhi. From what we have read in the newspapers you will see that some of them are really fretting at the restraint imposed upon them by Mr. Gandhi regarding recourse to violence. Some of them have put it forward that recourse to violence has been enjoined by their religion and the dictates to their religion require them not to observe the pact of non-violence any longer, but to resort to every means for the purpose of attaining their object. Now again, take the utterance of Maulana Mohomed Ali made some months ago. He distinctly stated "I am prepared to observe non-

CHAPTER VI

THE MONTAGU ACT

From this unpleasant topic we now pass on to the Conference resolution on self-government on which again the best contribution to sane thinking and practical step, was made by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer. The Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution advocating a change to full provincial autonomy within five years of the completion of the Government of India Act of 1919, and a step towards responsible government in the centre to start at the same time as the change in the Provinces. The Conference resolution on the subject was divided under three heads. First, it demanded full autonomy in the Provinces; secondly, in the Central Government it demanded autonomy except in the spheres of defence, foreign affairs, relations with the Indian States, and ecclesiastical affairs, with such safeguards as may be suitable and necessary for the protection of vested interests; and thirdly, it made the demand in response to public feeling in the country.

In answer to the objection that such a demand was preposterous, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said, "In making that claim we do not now put forward something which was not put forward originally, but we are simply reiterating the demand originally made." To those who maintained that the experience of one year was too short, he answered, "it may be truly said that during this period it has not been proved that the working of the Reforms has been a failure." Another

a solid argument in favour of introducing responsibility at the centre along with full autonomy in the Provinces."

Sir Sivaswami continued,

"I think the grant of responsible government may have the effect of precipitating the formation of parties which cannot but help the Government to determine its programme, to frame its policy, and to go forth to the Assembly confident in the expectation of support. I have no doubt that the introduction of responsible government and the principle of responsibility will have the effect of promoting better organisation."

To those who said, then, on the Government side that the Central Legislature was not a really representative one, he replied "I am afraid that in judging this matter Government is as impatient as the ardent spirits among ourselves." He reminded these opponents of the fact that they seemed to forget,

"that when responsible government was introduced in the United Kingdom the electorate bore but a small proportion to the population, and again, that in the initial stages only a small proportion of the electorates went to the polls and that they levelled their criticisms against us forgetting their own past history, and said we were not sufficiently advanced."

He concluded the argument thus, "I venture to claim that the legislatures are as representative as possible in the present position of affairs."

ADVANCE IN THE PROVINCES

As regards provincial Governments the resolution had asked for full provincial autonomy at the end of the first term. On this Sir Sivaswami Aiyer opined that he had all along felt that the Departments of Law and Justice might very well have been entrusted to popular control "for the reason that if these departments were not administered with a due sense of responsibility, it would recoil upon us far more than upon any other section of the community," and that

bound to find the necessary monies for the expenditure."

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer clinched the whole argument in favour of the proposed advance in the following significant words:—"The reasons which I have urged for the introduction of responsibility in the Provincial Governments apply with as much force to the case of the Central Government. In fact, it is more of that Government that I have been speaking with anything like personal experience than of the local governments. So far as the Provincial governments are concerned, it has been claimed by some heads of the administration that, in accordance with the expectation of the Joint Select Committee, notwithstanding the theoretical division of Governments in two halves, the two halves of the Government have been working as a unitary Government; then, this resolution asked that the procedure should be continued and formally recognised and legalised. If, on the other hand, they were not working as a Unitary Government, then, they urged that the whole should work as a Unitary Government in theory and practice."

the boycott of schools and colleges, the paucity of national institutions, and their far from satisfactory nature; it admitted the equal failure of the boycott of law-courts, and of their supersession by the private courts of arbitration. As regards khaddar it said, "Indeed, it has now become impossible to say of any particular piece that it is *shuddha Khaddar* and that not many of the numerous *Khaddar bhandars* dotting the whole country deal exclusively with genuine stuff". About the picketing of liquor shops it said "the immediate effect was a marked decline in the consumption of liquor but after the removal of the pickets the pendulum swung back and the evil asserted itself in full force."

The boycott of Councils had played a prominent part in the Congress activities of the autumn of 1920. The Councils were then declared to be 'impure,' 'unclean,' 'unholy,' the very touch of which was pollution. Others had called them 'temples of Maya.' The Committee was divided in its opinion on that matter. Pandit Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mr. V. J. Patel, who were in favour of Council Entry, wrote of it:—

"Times have now changed. Circumstances have altered. The period of the struggle is indefinitely prolonged. Measures affecting the daily life of the people are being enacted in the Legislature year after year. Fresh taxation and huge liabilities are being imposed with the help and in the name of the so-called representatives of the people, and *nolens volens* the people will have to submit to them. Under these circumstances it is a question for consideration how far the hold of the Congress over the masses can remain unaffected. Suppose the Congress persists in the boycott of the Councils in its present form, and it is found that a greater percentage of voters record their votes on the occasion, our claim would be discredited. We are inclined to believe that the policy of abstention has lost its charm and it is not at all unlikely that a

presidentship of Rt. Hon'ble Shrinivas Shastri, and we have to see what the liberals thought of it, and what they laid down as their policy to cope with it. In 1922, unfortunately for India, Mr. Montagu was first displaced from office, and next unseated from Parliament. The Conference at Nagpur made reference to the fact and passed a resolution expressing its regret, at the same time that it paid its tribute to the great work Mr. Montagu had done for India. Dr. R. P. Paranjpye moving the resolution made one of the best speeches of the Conference. He pointed out how Mr. Montagu had proved the best friend of India and deserved to be placed in the rank of India's benefactors like John Bright, Henry Fawcett and Sir William Wedderburn. As a statesman he had shown himself the equal of Burke, Canning, Ripon and Morley. And even amongst these he came nearer to the heart of India by his deep understanding of her mind and by his bold action in granting her what she desired.

We have space here only to quote Mr. Shastri's words on Mr. Montagu from his address as the President of the Conference. He said, "In the long history of our British connection, no one has loved India more, no one has suffered more for her, no one has been more courageous or persistent in the application to her of the noble principles of liberalism, no one amongst front-bench politicians in England has had a more thorough or sympathetic knowledge and appreciation of her problems or her ambitions, no one has had a higher conception of her destiny under the British Commonwealth, and no one has put together a more substantial record of actual accomplishment in the pursuit of that destiny. We all regretted very much the sinister intrigue which deprived him of office, and we regret still more the cross-currents of Eng-

preciation of your services to your country and the Empire. While you have been here, you have not only acquired for India a new reception in the Councils of the world, but I think you will carry back with you a true appreciation of the fact that I wish your countrymen would learn that hate begets bitterness, that the English want to serve India, that a real and dignified co-operation does not mean the abandonment or even the postponing, but rather the acceleration, of nationalist aspirations, and must meet—and does meet—with response from my fellow-countrymen. I have to thank you for much help, and feel grateful for much sympathy. I think you realise the difficulties of my task, and the assistance that you have given me has been much appreciated and will reinforce me in my work.”

Mr. Montagu, of course, refers in this letter to Mr Shastri's work at the Imperial Conference of 1921, to his tour in the Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and to his attendance at the Washington Conference. Everywhere he was given high praise for his ‘gift of the golden tongue,’ joined to his wisdom, independence of judgement, and his firm advocacy of India as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth of Nations. If not in national, at least in international politics, India's status was raised by the work of men like Mr. Shastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Supru. Government nominees though they were, they did not do anything by act or speech which may be called disservice to India. In a letter which Mr. Montagu wrote to Mr. Shastri on the 5th of March 1923, he said, “I need hardly tell you with what satisfaction I received the generous resolution passed by the Liberal Federation, and I hope you will find some suitable method of conveying to the members of your organisation my grateful thanks for their message.”

cutive were in agreement on any matter not involving imperial interests, there should be no interference from higher authority. Fiscal autonomy, to the extent we now enjoy it, is regarded as the special application of that principle. During the discussion of 1919 it was regarded as of the utmost importance, and in the period of transition, public opinion in India must jealously safeguard it from violation by the Secretary of State in the case of the Government of India and in the case of the Local Government by the Government of India."

Mr. Sastri continued, "some months ago in another connection I had occasion to praise Mr. Montagu for the way in which he was willing to let the autonomy of India develop even at the cost of some self-suppression, and I have heard him say with humourous exaggeration, that his ambition was soon to abolish himself. Could it be said that the India Office respects this principle sufficiently? The other day I read a long string of matters of apparent agreement between the Government of India and the Indian Legislature either negatived or held up at White Hall—the recommendations as to the Military expenditure, proposals for Indianising the Army, proposals for diminishing recruitment in England to the All-India Services, proposals for appointing Indians to the Indian Medical Services, and recommendations of the Racial Distinctions Committee. Even if the Secretary of State has interfered in some of these matters it is a cause of public alarm in India, and it is necessary to consider how to resist these encroachments. At the time the principle was introduced, I remember to have pointed out that, if it was to be at all efficacious, the Government of India ought to be expressly freed from the necessity of previously consulting the Secretary of State before taking part in the discussions with the

worked of the Provinces had reached its utmost limit of usefulness. Said the Minister, "I am Minister of Development minus Forests, and you all know that Development depends a good deal on Forests. I am Minister of Industries without Factories which are a reserved subject, and industries without Factories are unimaginable. I am Minister of Agriculture minus Irrigation. You can understand what that means. How agriculture can be carried on extensively without irrigation in the hands of those who are responsible for it is rather hard to realise. I am also Minister of Industries without electricity which is a reserved subject. You all know the part which electricity plays in the development of Industries nowadays. The subjects of Labour and of Boilers are also reserved. But these after all are some of the defects of the Reform Scheme."

After giving this quotation Mr. Sastri emphasised that if friction could not be avoided in these matters by the very nature of diarchy, even under a sympathetic Governor of a Province and with Mr. Montagu at head, it could be imagined how under a reaction that had set in after his exit, diarchy was doomed to downright failure or to reversion to autocracy which would be even worse than that failure. He concluded, "A half and half system is naturally productive of friction and wears the nerves of those who have to work it. Members of the service are not the least loud in demanding that the system should be developed to the full. It seems now to serve no useful purpose." It has to be observed in passing that not by wreckage but by full use of the working the machine were these defects brought to light, not on the principle of boycott or avoidance, but on the principle of discriminating co-operation and experience that gave insight and widened the vision. It was only by wearing the

a superstition and a fetish by which no wise man should swear." Surely, that was not an appreciation of the services rendered by moderates, liberals and others to make the Reforms a success. The country swayed by extremism had made their task extremely difficult—a thankless task almost—for the reason that they had been abused and reviled as not only lacking in patriotism and independence, but as toadies and traitors, as job-hunters and time-servers.

With all this misrepresentation and reviling in the press and on the platform they had gone on patiently, with an eye only to what they had felt as their duty by the country. It was these people who were recommending the change. It was they who had pointed out how diarchy had reached its limits of usefulness and a change over was inevitable. But the two Secretaries of State for India who had succeeded Mr. Montagu—both conservative, had remained obdurate, with the result that we know in all the happenings from 1924 to the end of 1929. Non-co-operation was not at an end, though as a programme it had failed, and was officially withdrawn. The Congress Swarajist Party went into the Councils and the Assembly with the resolve to non-co-operate from within. This helped considerably to postpone the revision of the Reforms leading smoothly to responsible government. Lord Reading in the closing years of his Viceroyalty and Lord Irwin till almost the end of his career, were unable to do anything that a move forward should be taken.

Under the incubus of the India Office presided over by Lord Peel and Lord Birkenhead, respectively, nothing was done and nothing could be done to conciliate even sane opinion in the country. The latter had pleaded that that opinion was not able to deliver the goods. But the fact of it was that he was radi-

substantial residuum of good and solid work in which all parties can join without any sacrifice of principle. We are conscious that the irresistible logic of facts has compelled us to say some hard things about the general attitude of councillors and co-operators throughout the country, but we must not be understood to mean that all councillors and co-operators are alike. Many of them have undoubtedly tried their best to work, if on lines of co-operation, in the right spirit. We venture to think that while agreeing to differ where difference is unavoidable, it is possible to discover a common basis for joint action if both parties meet in the right spirit. A beginning, however small, once made, is bound to lead to desirable results. As it is the highest duty of a non-co-operator to co-operate with his own countrymen when possible, we trust that these indications will develop into definite proposals at no distant date."

A death-bed repentance this—as subsequent events and attitude of the Congress extremists had amply proved. As Mr. Chintamani observed, "It is to be regretted that this wise conception of public duty was completely forgotten by Congressmen in every election in which they took part. . . Every time they declared war upon non-Congressmen without reference to their character or antecedents. I cannot help thinking that Congressmen, individuals excepted, have come to regard themselves as super-men and developed a degree of contemptuous intolerance for those who do not swear by their very frequently changing dogmas and "Doxies," and they have not been able to resist the temptation of placing party above the country."

could not be balanced by fresh taxation and by retrenchment in expenditure. To these difficulties was added the crop of inter-provincial controversies over the Meston Award. That Award had fixed a scale according to which the provinces were bound to contribute annually a certain sum towards the expenditure of the Central Government. And the Centre, in conditions outlined above, could not but insist upon its full share from the revenue of the Provinces as that was determined by the Meston Award. Hence the Provinces had not sufficient money in hand to spend on the nation—building departments in charge of the Ministries. If we bear these facts clearly in mind, we shall better appreciate the work of the Liberals during the first three years of the new reforms.

IN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

First we turn to the Central Legislatures, in which the principle of responsibility was entirely absent and in which advance was marked only by the fact that there was non-official majority in the Legislative Assembly and in the Council of State. The spirit of the new reforms marked the work of these two legislatures, nevertheless. As Lord Chelmsford had observed in his speech to the two Houses, autocracy had yielded place to guidance in the relationship between the members of the Legislatures and the Government of India. This was specially so in the first two years of their work during which Mr. Montagu had been the Secretary of State for India. During this period certification was resorted to by the Governor-General only on two occasions—first, in connection with the Princes' Protection Bill, and secondly, in the enhancement of the Salt tax.

While the defects of diarchy were discovered by working it, one cannot say about the reforms as a

Council. The Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of the General Staff were to be appointed by the British Cabinet on the nomination of the Secretary of State in consultation with the Government of India. The Commander-in-Chief's right of correspondence with the chief of the Imperial General Staff was to be restricted, so that the Government of India was not committed to any pecuniary responsibility or to any military policy not previously decided upon. Indians were to be freely admitted to all arms of the Military and Naval and Air Forces, the Auxiliary Services and the Auxiliary Forces, and no less than 25 per cent of the King's Commissions granted every year, were to be allotted to Indians. A school for training to enter Sandhurst was to be established at Dehra Dun. A Royal Military College at Dehra Dun, on lines similar to Sandhurst was sanctioned, but was not then established owing to financial stringency. The creation of territorial and Auxiliary Forces was recommended and action taken thereon. Several measures such as India's capacity to bear the present standard of Military Expenditure, the training of Indians in National Self-defence etc. were investigated by the Military Requirements Committee. Many resolutions which were adopted by the Assembly were communicated to the Secretary of State. In the course of a debate, in February 1923, on a resolution for the Indianisation of the higher ranks of the Army, an announcement was made that Eight units would be Indianised."

Out of the 20 resolutions brought before the House in connection with the reorganisation and Indianisation of the Army, 16 were moved by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, out of which the House adopted fifteen and negatived one. And the Government was all along sympathetic to them, either taking action themselves or forwarding them for consideration to the Secretary

eyed Mr. N. M. Samarth pointed out the error in the budget figures, and it was rectified. The amendments proposed to the taxation proposals of Government were several in number. The chief one of them related to the retention of the price of the post-card to its old level of one pice. The loss to Government in the estimated revenue was Rs. 75 lakhs. The action of the Assembly in its disposal of the budget may be summarised thus:—it effected a reduction by Rs. 1.29 crores on expenditure side, and of Rs. 0.85 crore in taxation.

A ruling given by the Chair about these amendments, established a principle which deserves notice here. "The framers of the Act have given therein statutory expression to the English constitutional rule that demands for supply must come from the Crown, in other words, the Legislatures can reduce but cannot increase expenditure. If that is so, it seems to involve the necessary consequences that taxation to provide for such expenditure must also be initiated by the Crown. I think, I must, therefore, rule that an amendment by a non-official member speaking on behalf of the Government which has the effect of increasing taxation proposal by the Bill, is out of order. The point is this, that the Crown makes a demand, the Crown proposes taxation, the Council can reduce the demand for taxation, but it can neither increase the demand nor can it increase taxation." The ruling was given as a result of notice of two amendments proposed to be moved by the Maharajah of Cossimbazar for such increase in the budget of 1922-23.

The non-official members effected the following reduction in Government proposals for taxation. A reduction was made of the total amount of Rs. 9.56 crores with the result that the Government had to

Governor-General, as also Rs. 3 lakhs, which were the expense for Royal Commission.

The proposal to double the Salt duty, the Assembly negatived by 59 to 44 votes. The Government supported an amendment to raise it from Rs. 1-4 to Rs. 2, but it was defeated by 55 to 48. On account of the decision given by the Chair that non-official members had not the power to move amendments which would have the effect of enhancing taxation, a number of amendments to that effect were ruled out of order. The Finance Bill was introduced in the Council of State in a recommended form, with the Salt Duty doubled, and passed in that Chamber by 28 to 10. It was reintroduced in the Legislative Assembly and was again rejected by 58 to 47. It was, therefore, certified by the Governor-General under powers vested in him by the Act. Resolution to grant full fiscal autonomy to India was moved in the Council of State by Mr. Lalubhai Samaldas. Government accepted it with the amendment—subject to provisions in the Government of India Act—and it was subsequently given effect to in full. So much for finance and taxation.

LABOUR

All labour Legislation, according to the agreements arrived at at international conferences on this important subject, found its place on the Statute book during the first three years of the new reforms. The Indian Factories Act was amended to limit the hours of work in a Factory to 60 a week; the minimum age for employing children in factories was raised to 12; the maximum working hours of a day were to be no more than 12; an hour's rest for 6 hours work was imposed; one day's rest in a week was made compulsory by law; the term "factory" was interpreted to mean an institution employing twenty persons, with power

Sastri. He brought up a resolution (14-2-21) proposing a Committee "to examine the Repressive laws and to recommend their repeal or modification." Government accepted the resolution with the amendment agreed to by the House, that an equal number of members from the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State was to constitute the Committee and to report before the Simla Sessions. The report of the Committee was given full effect to by the Government. Accordingly the Press Act of 1910 and the Newspaper Incitement Offence Act of 1908 were repealed in 1922. The bill for the repeal was introduced in the Lower House by the Home Member, Sir William Vincent. So also were repealed the Bengal State Offences Regulation of 1804 (used in the Punjab in 1919) by the Special Laws Repealing Act of 1922. The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 used in Bengal and Eastern Bengal to cope with terrorism, was repealed by an Act called the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Repealing Act of 1922. The year 1923 saw the passing of an Act known as the Criminal Law Amendment Act which removed a certain existing discrimination between European British subjects and Indians in criminal trials. It may be said in conclusion that the Acts that were modified and not repealed, continued on the Statute book as safeguards against unrest in the country due to non-co-operation and its last phase of Civil Disobedience.

IN THE PROVINCES

From the work of the Central Legislatures, we must now turn to the work in the provincial Councils. We cannot deal with the matter in full detail here. Suffice it to note some of its most salient features. These are judiciously summed up in the manifesto of the National Liberal Federation issued in August 1923.

fortunate circumstance that Ministers were called to administer their departments when financial difficulties became very serious, and, therefore, naturally the first reforms to be effected were those which did not entail much outlay of money. For instance, municipalities and District Boards have in most provinces been placed on a popular footing. But ministers have not shrunk from undertaking large schemes involving heavy increases in expenditure and thus facing additional taxation. Some of the measures introduce bold new departures in policy which would have been almost inconceivable in the old regime. I would give the first place among these to Dr. Paranjpye's Compulsory Education Act which replaces the optional compulsion of the Act of 1918 by absolute compulsion, and seeks to universalise primary education in the whole of Presidency within ten years. Mr. Chintamani has introduced in the United Provinces, excise reforms calculated to effect a very drastic reduction in the consumption of alcohol etc. In the Bombay Presidency Mr. C. V. Mehta has already introduced a reform which, if small in itself, initiates a new policy substituting direct for indirect checks on consumption. In Madras, Ministers have adopted the policy of giving judicious state aid to new or nascent industries and have put in hand several other measures of no small benefit to the Province. Reform of old Universities and establishment of new ones are taken in hand in several Provinces. These and other measures of the kind are the first fruits of the popular control over transferred departments for which we, the constitutionalists, need not blush."

A FEW OPINIONS

We shall conclude this survey by quoting a few opinions of leading men who were directly concerned

with regard to the Executive Council, we have got increased opportunities of influence." As an instance of the latter Mr. Trivedi pointed out, "The most important measure on Reserved Subjects introduced by Councillors was a Taxation Bill on Entertainments in the first Sessions of 1922. It was rejected by the Legislature to force retrenchment on Government before taxation was voted. This had a good effect, and Government promised 60 lakhs of retrenchment which ultimately reached one crore. When the Entertainment Tax was again brought in, in the September and December Sessions, Government tried to levy only 25 per cent tax on Race Admission, but the legislature insisted on 50 per cent and it succeeded against strong Government opposition." Mr. Trivedi continued, "The Governor did not once exercise his veto on Bills of Ministers or Private members, nor has he certified any bills brought in by Councillors and rejected by the Council."

From Bombay we turn to Madras and note the following opinion:—"The Governor did not exercise his veto in regard to any measure. In the case of Elementary Education Act Amendment Bill it was the Ministers who voted against it. As regards Communal Representation in Judicial Services, all the four Councillors were against it and all the three Ministers remained neutral and the Motion was carried." If we recall that it was the Justice Party—the non-Brahmin Party—that was in power in Madras and gave Ministers to the Government, we can understand how and why in the two instances given above by Mr. Ranganathan, the Ministry showed itself so reactionary. The opinion continues:—"The Services keenly felt their loss of power owing to the Reforms, but it must be said that they are adjusting themselves to the new situation. The real reason for the absence of friction

was joint deliberation, and in the first year, as a rule, decisions were taken jointly. Subsequently, however, there was a fairly frequent recollection that the Government was a diarchy. Joint decisions became infrequent; joint deliberation became less frequent than in the first year. More recently, it has been nine-tenths of real diarchy and one-tenth of nominal joint deliberation, and never a whole Government "acting as a cabinet." The change from Sir Harcourt Butler as Governor of the United Provinces to Sir William Marris as his successor, we may remark, marked the change from liberalism to reaction.

CONCLUSION

We have quoted these opinions from four provinces to show what the experience of non-official members who worked in the Councils was about diarchy. In Madras the non-Brahmin party had swept the elections and the policy of its Ministers inclined too much on the side of communalism. In Bombay there was not much of sound party alignment and consolidation, and groups formed the feature of the Legislature, and non-Brahmin group was also in existence. What the state was in Bengal we have already learnt from the opinion of Mr. Bose quoted above. And yet diarchy showed, on the whole, good results. As Rt. Hon'ble Sastri pointed out "it did not prove a pitfall to the feet or a fetter to the limbs of those who had come forward to shoulder the burden and go forward."

From the end of 1922 onwards there was a distinct reaction. The beginning of the reaction was marked by recourse to certification, by defiance of the convention that the Secretary of State shall not interfere where the Legislature and the Government are fully agreed on any question, and, lastly, by the direction from the Secretary of State to local governments that

CHAPTER IX

INDIANS OVERSEAS

The one question of supreme importance that absorbed the attention of the public from 1923 to 1926 was that of the status of Indians, as equal subjects under the British Crown, in its colonies across the seas like South Africa and Kenya. Of these South Africa was a self-governing dominion and Kenya was no better than a crown colony, because it was a mandated territory made over to Great Britain under the constitution of the League of Nations and did not enjoy the kind of self-government which the Union of South Africa enjoyed. In both these territories, however, the Indians who had gone there as labourers and had since been domiciled, were treated by the white settlers as inferior to themselves in political status. They were meted out a position which was inconsistent with their rights as equal subjects under the British Crown. Both South Africa and Kenya had benefited immensely by Indian Labour, and, yet the Indians, who had settled there and had become both wealthy and educated, were practically regarded as outcasts of society. With all that the Government of India could do, backed in this matter by public opinion in India, it had failed to improve the status of their fellow-subjects not only in South Africa but even in Kenya.

AN EFFORT TO MEND MATTERS

At the time to which we are referring, the Colonial Office in England was as averse from change in status for Indians as the South African Boer and British, and

cisions." And the fact becomes worse still when we remember that the decisions were taken and published when important negotiations were going on between the representatives of Indians in Kenya and the White Settlers there and the Colonial Office. The Indian case was put forward ably by a deputation led by Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, "whose knowledge of the subject," Sir Tej Bahadur observed, "was only surpassed by his enthusiasm for the cause." A diehard politician in England argued with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, presuming upon his ignorance, that Kenya was not a crown Colony and that though it had not responsible government it had an element of responsibility. The politician forgot what Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru pointed out to him, that "it was a dangerous suggestion to make, for, similarly India might claim that though it had not responsible government, it had a measure of responsibility in the Provinces."

The fact of the matter was that His Majesty's Government found the white settlers too strong for them. To those who maintained that the White Paper had improved the position of Indians in Kenya Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru answered that "not even the Government of India, apart from the Indians themselves, thought so." And in support he quoted from the Viceroy's speech to the Legislative Assembly to the effect that "the news of the decisions regarding Kenya came to me (the Viceroy) no less than to you as a great and severe disappointment. As his Majesty's Government had stated, the decision conflicts on material points with the strongly expressed views of my Government as laid before the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for India."

AT THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

In the Imperial Conference of 1923 Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru succeeded in discovering a procedure to



Sir Phiroze Sethna
(President 1929)



Sir M. Ramchandra Rao
(President 1933)



Mr. Jitendra Nath Basu
(President 1933)



Pandit Hridaya Nath Kunzru
(President 1934)

fight, it seems to me, the failure of one step is only an incentive to another. Frankly speaking those who raise objections of this character should be prepared to suggest alternatives, and if they have alternatives of their own, why have they not acted on those alternatives and what has been there to prevent them from taking an independent action of their own? It is far better that we should work steadily and patiently, but with a full determination to get wrongs remedied than that we should indulge in threats which we do not mean to give effect to or which we know or ought to know cannot be given effect to."

How were the white settlers in South Africa and Kenya, not to speak of their brethren in Canada and Australia, able to defy the opinion of India supported by its Government, was the question which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru asked himself and gave an answer exactly the same that Gokhale gave on a similar occasion in days prior to the Montagu Reforms. Sir Tej Bahadur said about it, "I do not think that if India were a self-governing country within the Empire, the wishes of her Government or her people could be ignored or a decision which was resented even by the Government or India could be given, as it was in July last, when on the main questions the opinion of the white settlers prevailed. It, therefore, seems to me that while on the one hand it is our duty to emphasise our claim regarding proper, just and equal treatment outside India, our duty is even more imperative, that we should lay still greater stress upon the achievement of responsible government in India itself."

As regards the status of Indians in the Colonies, there are striking words in the correspondence of Mr. Sastri recently published, from which we take the following to show what work the liberal party as a whole and the leaders of that party like Sastri and Sapru in

subject to a member of Parliament in England. The letter is highly instructive in the sense that it places the entire question in its proper light and affords wise guidance to those who would follow it.

A LARGER QUESTION

"During my stay in England I had a vivid perception, such as I had not had before, of the strength of certain forces and modes of thought inconsistent with the higher ideals of the Britanic Empire and the continuance of India within the Britanic fold. Of course one feels their overpowering strength in India every day. But one had hopes that among the chastening influences of the war was a progressive diminution of that strength in the Home of Parliamentary Institutions. That hope was rudely shaken out of me during the recent Kenya dispute in London."

Mr. Sastri writes in the same letter on the larger question as follows:

"Where India is concerned, British policy moves most on the lower, and not on the higher, plane. Public controversy is handicapped and to some extent vitiated by the assumption that Parliament and British Statesmen are invariably guided by the noble ideal; attempts to justify British action as fulfilling this high test must appear to the aggrieved Indian mind not only far-fetched but hypocritical. Believe me, thoughts of this kind have driven me, more than anything else, to the conclusion that it is necessary immediately to bring practice into conformity with theory and confer upon India and Indians real equality and partnership. King and Parliament are alike pledged to the new ideal. Delay, though desirable on some grounds, is prolific of mischief, breeds distrust, not, alas, without justification, and exacerbates feeling. Full preparedness, perfect fitness, ripe maturity, these are counsels of perfection. Nothing in this imperfect world comes exactly at the moment fixed for it by idealists. In the rough school of life people are often fitted for institutions by the practice of them. Good policy requires that the national demand made recently in the Assembly with the concurrence of the moderate as well as the advanced school of politics, be met in a spirit of sympathy and hearty response."

CHAPTER X

NATIONAL DEMAND

The urgency of pressing the demand for responsible government was felt between 1921-26 by all political parties in the country. A resolution to that effect was first moved in the Assembly in 1921 and again in 1924. The Muddiman Committee reported in 1925 when Mr. Baldwin had taken office and Lord Birkenhead was Secretary of State. The Report was not unanimous. The Majority Report was signed by Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Chairman, and two other British and two Indian members. It took the view that "their terms of reference did not permit suggestions for any fundamental change in the system. So it confined itself to detailed recommendations for facilitating the working of diarchy." The Minority Report signed by four Indian members, who were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, Mr. Jinnah and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, held that diarchy was unworkable and that the various defects pointed out by provincial governments were inherent in the scheme. As such they wrote "To our mind, the proper question is not whether any alternative, transitional scheme can be devised, but whether the constitution should not be put on a permanent basis with provisions for automatic progress in the future so as to secure stability in the Government and the willing co-operation of the people." And they urged that a serious attempt should be made at an early date to solve the question. But the Committee's Report was simply

- (4) During this period a fixed amount should be allotted for expenditure on the departments controlled by the Governor-General who should be free to spend up to that limit notwithstanding an adverse vote by the Assembly.
- (5) When the Governor-General certifies that an emergency has arisen which requires additional expenditure for the safety of the country, he shall have authority to incur such expenditure, but he shall apprise the Legislative Assembly of such expenditure at its next sitting.

The resolution proposed the Indianisation of the army, military training of Indians, recruitment for higher services in India and by Government of India, and other matters that would expedite the establishment of self-government in India. It strongly advised that a Commission should be appointed forthwith with Indian representatives on it to report on these proposals.

SCHEME—NOT OUR PART

Mr. Chintamani said of it, -

"I do not think that non-officials anywhere will be showing that they are astute politicians if they accept the invitation of the other side to commit themselves to details without being primed with actual details, without which a scheme cannot be produced. All that we are called upon to do is to state in clear and unambiguous language, in the form of a series of propositions, what are the lines on which we wish the Reforms to be undertaken. There our responsibility ends. Up to that point we have a duty to discharge. Speaking for the liberal party I say that that duty has been adequately and abundantly discharged by our party during the last three years. You have read the resolution that I have put to the House, and if you tell me you are not quite clear in your mind of what it is that we want, I can only say—I sympathise with you."

the Legislative Assembly set their seal of approval upon the resolution of the Liberal Federation passed last year at Lucknow in all its vital parts and essentials, it may be said that the progressive political parties in India are all agreed on the lines upon which they want a constitutional reform to proceed. Placed by the side of that resolution, the Commonwealth of India Bill drawn up by a National Convention, I think even the authorities of that measure will without hesitation agree, is not a perfect piece of workmanship. Take the main provisions of the Bill and I have no hesitation, after having read our own resolution and the Bill, in stating that they proceed on parallel lines. You have, therefore, the Swaraj Party, the Independent Party, the National Convention and with it the National Home Rule League, and the Liberal Party—they are all agreed upon the Reforms which, in my judgment, the country requires, and they have all stated with sufficient clearness and precision and in sufficient detail what should be the main provisions of the present Government of India Act or the New Government of India Act, and if the Secretary of State or any other authority affects to believe that they are still in ignorance of what Indians want, you may take it that that affectation of ignorance is only a cloak for constitutional disinclination to introduce changes which are necessary no less in the interests of England than they are of India."

This was Mr. Chintamani's answer to Lord Birkenhead's first speech on India in the House of Lords, no less than to those in India and England who had brushed aside the Minority Report of the Muddiman Committee and, at the same time, while preferring to it the Majority Report, had not the grace to carry it out in full. This was merely tinkering with the problem as Mr. Ramsay Macdonald said at the time. Mr. Chintamani said of the Majority Report,

"I have read few documents known by the stately name of Reports of Commissions etc., which are more thin and less entitled to appreciation or admiration than the Report of the Majority of the Muddiman Committee, and in this opinion; substantially at any rate, I am upheld by our late Secretary of State, Lord Olivier whom even the

tion which co-operates; non-violence which becomes violent; civil disobedience which does not obey and is not civil; passive resistance in which there is neither resistance nor passivity—are these the sanctions by which you will obtain Swaraj?”

The moral of the story he sums up in the following memorable passage:—

“Every species of extremism that has been employed during the last 30 years has only resulted—I have stated this many times and I will repeat it any number of times in future, because it is a historical truth—every species of extremism that has been attempted or practised by Indian politicians during the last 30 years has had for its net result merely a new repressive campaign and a new series of repressive laws in the Statute Book resulting in the curtailment of the liberties we enjoy. Whereas, if we are in the year 1925 a more politically advanced people than we were 50 years or 25 years or 10 years ago, if we have attained a position from which we can plead for Swaraj, we have attained that position wholly and entirely because of the pursuit of constitutional agitation as our political method. If any one tells me it is a bankrupt method, I should like to be a bankrupt of that description.”

LIBERALISM

These stinging words remind us of the equally striking and blunt expression of a writer who has written eloquently and truly of the principles of liberalism and liberals in England when they had fallen upon bad times. And we are tempted to quote it here. Says the writer,

“Liberalism comes of a great tradition and can appeal to a splendid past. You can no more disassociate it, at any moment, from the stream of tendency which at this moment it represents, than you can dissociate some particular generation in the history of a Church or a Nation. Great political parties, embodying undying principles and set on realising them in action, have something of the life in them which is revealed amid transitory generations, with the power of evoking passionate devotion only comparable to that directed to a lover or to God. The Liberal

the thousand ills they had been suffering from, and naturally they turned to magic and miracles instead of logic. But it did not take them long to be disillusioned. All this was like ploughing the sands, and did not lead the country anywhere except to a blind alley from which there was no exit."

JUXTAPOSITION IS NOT UNITY

One of the important issues at the time was that of unity among all parties. The party of non-co-operation had already begun talking of such unity in the country. A Unity Conference was held in Bombay in 1924 prior to the Congress Session at Belgaum. The Bombay Conference had led the parties nowhere, and we have seen how matters stood at the end of 1925. On this point Dr. Paranjpye as President of the Liberal Conference held at Lucknow in 1924 spoke very plainly. His words are worth quoting even today. For we are no better united to-day than in 1924. He said,

"We would like to see how the proposed formulae of reconciliation, even if they are accepted by the other side, will be followed in actual practice. A mere unity by physical juxtaposition is worse than useless; it may even be the unity of the wolf and the lamb—the lamb within the wolf."

He pointed out that "there were at the time various parties in India whose outlooks on political questions were widely different. The three political parties were No-changers, the Swarajists and the Liberals. Other parties were more or less on a communal basis though they were also keen on political advance on certain conditions. Taking first the three pure political parties he did not see that they could work harmoniously on the same platform. Broadly the No-Changers Party were a Party that looked backward. It was content to be under the command of a single dictator and was willing to follow all his notions reasonable or otherwise. The party was reconciled outwardly with

position in an organisation purporting to comprehend all progressive politicians."

He then raised an important issue thus:—

"Would the Liberals and Independents, who might now come in, be allowed to stand as candidates even against the Swarajists and Responsivists? Liberal candidates wherever they stand will be denounced as disloyal Congressmen. What would then be of the comprehensive unity which it is the sole object of the Sabarmati meeting to attain? Again acceptance of office is with us a door to the honourable service of the public. We do not accept the judgment recently pronounced by an influential leader that we value it only for the power or pelf it brings while others would value it on influential and patriotic grounds."

And further he pointed out the crucial difference between his own party and the men of the other side who will assemble at Sabarmati. He affirms,

"The question of Civil Disobedience is neither so easy or so simple as it appears to most speakers and writers on the problem. The country is not fit for any drastic measures of this kind and will not be fit for many years yet. I am desirous like any others of a common understanding among political parties and of a reunion under the wings of the Congress. But I wish that our reconciliation should be based on simple and intelligent agreements. And being a man of peace, I am not attracted to the ideal of re-entering the Congress as a disaffected minority with the prospect of conducting an internecine struggle of infinite duration for the purpose of becoming the majority."

These two opinions read together show clearly why and how there could be no unity among parties fundamentally divided in principle, outlook and methods of work. Later years had not helped to improve matters precisely because even the Swarajists by that time had been wiped out of existence by the Gandhian mandate of civil disobedience. All the same, liberals had never held back from co-operation when co-operation seemed possible, and fruitful of good to the country. The All Parties' Conference in 1928 was an

CHAPTER XI

QUEST FOR UNITY

In the last chapter we have referred to the efforts made, first in Bombay and then at Sabarmati, to unite all political parties under the wings of the Congress, and quoting from Dr. Paranjapye and the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri, have showed how and why they had failed. That was in 1924. We have a further report of a similar move and its result, on the eve of the elections to the Councils and the Legislative Assembly in 1926. Rao Bahadur Damle of Akola gives us a brief account of this fresh effort in his speech as Chairman of the Reception of the Liberal Conference in 1926.

NATIONAL PARTY

This is what he says of it,

"The Liberals and the Responsivists offered to coalesce into a new party which was formally established in Bombay in the first week of April 1926 at a meeting of the members of these parties in Chinabagh. The recognised leaders of the Responsive Co-operation Party, Messrs. Jayakar and Kelkar, expressed their personal agreement with the aims and policy of this Nationalist Party, but deferred final action until the members of their party were finally consulted and their consent to coalesce in this party was obtained. Seeing that a formidable combination of the prominent intelligent section of the political workers was being formed to oppose the activities of the Swarajists, Mr. Motilal Nehru tried through the personal influence of Mr. Gandhi to bring about an understanding between the Swarajists and the Responsivists. On the 21st of April last a compromise was effected

1924 succeeded over his rivals of the Swarajists Party in the United Provinces in the elections of 1926. So also had succeeded Pandit Hirdayanath Kunzru. It was only in Madras, unlike in the elections of 1924, that the Swarajists scored heavily against Justicites, and the reason for it was, that the latter had proved during their term of office too communal, and there were no rival nationalist candidates put forward in Madras to contest the seats against the Swarajists. Mr. Sastri's fears in 1924 and Dr. Paranjpye's opinion in 1925, were more than justified by the sequel of the compromise at Sabarmati in 1926 between the Swarajists and the Responsivists—between the two groups in the same camp. And the experience, later on, of the National party in Bombay, inspite of the hearty co-operation and strenuous backing of that effort by persons like Sir Chimanlal Setalwad and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, pointed the same moral.

Sir Sivaswami Aiyer in his presidential address to the Liberal Conference at Akola in December 1926 said about the matter as follows:—

“With the robust good sense and grip of the actualities which is characteristic of the Maharashtrian Community, they have led a revolt against the fatuous policy of the Swarajist party and succeeded in forming the party of responsive co-operation. We welcome the formation of this party which has practically adopted our creed, though it has not joined us and seems to fight shy of the name ‘Liberals.’ In what respect the creed of this party differs from ours and what its distinguishing characteristics are, I have not succeeded in ascertaining. But I prefer to dwell on the large measure of agreement between their views and ours rather than upon our differences. All honour to the leaders of this revolt and I offer my felicitations to Mr. Kelkar, Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Aney and other leaders on the conspicuous success which has attended their efforts. The formation of the Responsive co-operation party is really a triumph of the principles for which the Liberal Party has all along stood.”

country between the Hindus and the Muslims. Every one realises today more poignantly than ever in the past, how disunion, division and feuds, between these two great communities of India, had contributed largely to the stalemate in the country. The Hindu-Muslim Unity has become to-day the *sine qua non* of all progress. The absence of it has hampered our progress towards Swaraj as nothing else has done. To-day the quarrel is more political than religious, though the differences of race, religion and culture have been imported into the controversy to make our politics bitter, fanatical and perverse.

In the time of which we are writing, the Muslim League had not become such an enemy of the Congress as it is to-day. The entente between it and the Congress since 1915 had continued almost unbroken till the conclusion of the All Parties' Conference at the end of 1928. In fact, there was a division in the ranks of the Muslim Leaguers themselves. Punjab had its own League started by Sir Mahomed Shaffi as a rival to the older League led by Mr. Jinnah. The feud between the Muslims and the Hindus wore then a religious aspect, and was an off-shoot of the failure of the Khilafat movement in India. The bitter disappointment of the Khilafatist Party and its flying apart from the Congress, had led to the fomenting of dissensions between the Muslims and the Hindus over the two questions of music before the mosque and cow-slaughter. Of course, behind them was politics no doubt. The murder of Swami Shraddhanand at the end of 1926 by a fanatical Muslim, was the worst manifestation of these dissensions.

In July 1924 inter-communal feeling had become violent. The Hindu-Muslim tension was rising and it reached its climax at Kohat in the Frontier Province. A pamphlet written by a Hindu contained highly in-

"To my mind the differences that divide the two communities and the reasons that have engendered distrust between them are more political than religious. Perfectly true that we get manifestations in religious tracks of this feeling of distrust. Both on the Muslim and the Hindu side, possibly these differences were not real. The Muslims believed that in any representative self-governing India, they, being in a numerical minority, may be swamped in the administration of the country. On the other hand, the Hindus felt that the Muslim population of India were not looking forward to a self-governing India but their eyes were turned towards Pan-Islamic developments in which they may have old glories of Mohomedan domination not only in India but in the world restored to them."

The Mahomedan fear of the Hindus, though unfounded, had resulted in later years, true to the forecast, in insistence on communal and separate electorates with weightage for the minority far in excess of the number of that minority. Playing upon that fear the leaders of that community had succeeded in winning for it "their fourteen points" at the close of the R.T.C. discussions. To conciliate that minority Mr. Gandhi had gone far enough to sign a blank cheque in their favour. But its obstinacy was not conquered and unity had receded into the distance. The two-nations theory and Pakistan were the off-shoots of the Pan-Islamism so overtly maintained in 1926. So the contention of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in 1926 was neither unreasonable nor without facts to support it. To seek to compose the quarrel by offering an easy solution of lesser religious differences had proved but a superficial cure. Time has shown that the dispute over cow-killing and music before mosque had fallen behind, and riots had also become rare; and yet since 1935 the Hindu and the Muslim community had by no means come nearer each other. Therefore, it was politics more than religion that was dividing them.

In the successive sessions of 1926 and 1927 the

with the ordinary use of such streets by the public and with necessary precautions against obstruction of the thoroughfare or breaches of public peace. Rules to this effect were in force in Mysore, Cochin, Travancore and Hyderabad and had largely prevented riots as are being witnessed in recent years throughout British India. Magistrates must exercise their powers in this respect with strict impartiality. Rather than protect the civil rights of the people, they had found it easier to issue orders of prohibition, with the result that the very orders of prohibition had induced the people to take the law in their own hands as in several cases in Northern India with disastrous effect for the country as a whole."

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's presidential address in 1927 dealt with the same question. In view of the theory rampant in our midst to-day that Hindus and Muslims can live peacefully in a self-governing India only by setting up two houses, two states or two nations, demarcated from each other, rather than by accommodating themselves into a common household and inspired by a common feeling of patriotism for the motherland,—in view of this narrower theory of division and partition,—the following words of Sir Tej Bahadur on Hindu-Muslim Unity uttered 17 years ago, deserve special mention in these pages. Quoting from the Canadian statesman, Mr. Borden, and from the eminent historian Lord Acton, he maintained that

"Human progress is not advanced by the segregation of races or by any influence to perpetuate racial antagonism, and that the true ideal lay in the union of different races in one state, to the services of which each brings its own peculiar qualities. We did not know whether, strictly speaking, it was accurate to speak of the Hindus and the Mohomedans as belonging to different races. The two communities had lived together in this country for centuries and they had a common political history for at least two centuries."

The Hindu-Mahomedan question, which had become an acute point of controversy and had led to

order." No mere pacts can solve the question satisfactorily and finally, as the history of the past pacts had gone to prove. The famous Luknow pact was an instance in point. Another pact was the pact in Calcutta between the Hindus and the Mohomedans sponsored by Mr. C. R. Das. What then was the remedy to this internecine struggle? Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru ventured to say on the point, that

"The time has now come when the Hindus and the Muslims alike should recognise that it is no longer possible in any country aspiring to possess modern institutions for one community to impose its religious ideas or principles upon another. The freedom of the one can only be limited by the freedom of another, and unless this is boldly recognised, you cannot hope to be anywhere near the solution."

Does not this observation clearly imply that while the tyranny of the majority was intolerable, the tyranny of the minority was worse than intolerable? Again, does it not help us to derive from it the corollary, which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru himself put forward later on, "that Maulanas and Moulvis as well as saints and mahants should have nothing to do with politics and the political readjustment of India?" If on the one hand, it was proper to say, as the editor of a famous monthly in England had boldly said, that "scoundrels must be hounded out of politics," then it was equally proper to say that, in communal and political disputes, saints and prophets were equally out of court. For they helped by their meddling with the matter, to do nothing better than "perpetuate the antiquated mummeries of a bygone age."

What else were the bickerings and bigotries over cow-slaughter and music before the mosque? What else were the 'doxies' which had made so much of the mystery of the spinning wheel and khaddar, and of many a similar crotchet in Mr. Gandhi's once adver-

said in his address in 1926 in support of the strict and impartial application of the existing law with due regard for the civil liberties of the people.

On the broader political issues Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru insisted on certain fundamentals, which he regarded as the *sine qua non* of any permanent settlement. These were:—(1) the need for adequate political representation of the minorities; (2) the need to realise that no protection of the minorities can go the length of converting them into the majority; (3) the need, again, to grasp clearly the fact that in any democratic constitution of a mixed population the minority should, subject to the limits prescribed for the protection of its special interests, be prepared to accept the decisions of the majority. And, by way of final appeal and exhortation, he said, "While I would appeal to my Hindu fellow countrymen who form the vast majority of the country not to be too punctilious about numerical proportions everywhere, I would similarly urge it on our Mahomedan fellow-countrymen not to make a fetish of separate electorates."

THE SEQUEL

It will not be out of place to state here, that Sir Tej Bahadur had given the same advice from the platform of the All-Parties' Conference at the end of 1928, and if his advice had been followed then, the Nehru Report would not have suffered the fate it had met with, and the Hindu-Muslim Entente would not have broken down. Mr. Jinnah, at that time, was an thorough-going Nationalist, he was a member and leader of the Muslim League. He pleaded from the platform of the All Parties' Conference that the Muslims should be given 33 per cent representation in the Legislative Assembly, and then they would agree to the proposal in the Nehru Report "to substitute Joint Electorates

in stabbing the report in the Muslim Conference, and killing it, at last, in the Congress itself.

An opportunity for Hindu-Muslim Unity, lost then, never returned. Mr. Jinnah with his fourteen points became thenceforward the thorough-going communalist that we know him to be to-day. The separate and communal electorates remained with more than their due weightage for the minorities to accompany them. The communal award embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 was the heavy price the country had to pay for the blunder in 1928 to which we have referred above. And we have, into the bargain, to face Pakistan as the fruit of the working of that Act by the Congress Ministries from 1937-39. "The paramount necessity of a spirit of compromise" being absent from the discussion on the communal question in the All Parties' Conference, the Conference failed in that material point. The triumph of the extremists whom Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had warned "not to be too punctilious about strict numerical proportion everywhere," and "not to make a fetish of separate electorates," was the ruin of the cause.

We turn now to the resolution of the Liberal Conference on the same subject in 1926 and 1927. The principal speakers were Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. Mr. Chintamani dealt with its religious aspect and pointed out with facts and figures, how the bitterness had increased because the officials of the Government had not held the scales even between the rights of the two communities in the dispute in question. In conclusion he said,

"The facts I have placed before you justify in my opinion the criticism that either the Government and their officers or the officers of the Government in spite of the Government, do require the request, the warning from this public body, to see that the law is enforced, enforced prom-

laboured under, and their interests as well as the interests of the Hindus and of all other communities—Parsees and Christians as well—were absolutely identical. Therefore, it behoved both communities to do all in their power to remove these feelings of distrust between the two communities.”

NATIONAL PATRIOTISM

We now go to the year 1927. In the resolution on the question before the Conference the point was stressed that national patriotism should be the foundation of representative institutions, and such patriotism can best be developed by a system of joint electorates qualified by a reservation of seats for important minorities, until such time as it may be possible with the goodwill of the community concerned to dispose with the reservation of seats. Again, the Federation called upon all its members to promote and actively support every movement calculated to bring about a better understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims and to place the relations of the communities upon an honourable footing of toleration in religious matters, and on a basis of unity in political matters, by the just representation of the minorities in the Legislatures and with due regard to efficiency in the public services of the country.

Mr. Faiz B. Tyabji, son of Budruddin Tyabaji, one of the very few Mohomedans who swore by the Indian National Congress in its early years from 1886 to 1893, moved the resolution on inter-communal unity to which we have referred above. On inter-communal unity he said,

“It was most deplorable that religion, the object of which was the good of humanity, should have been made the means by which we were divided among ourselves and in the name of which we were causing loss, harm and disunion among ourselves. That deplorable circumstance was present in India in such a form that we cannot shut

you neglect one part or member of it—if you exercise only your right eye and neglect your left eye.”

And when will the reservation of seats disappear from the constitution, the speaker asked himself and answered:—

“That will come about when every majority community and every member of each community recognises that in order that the whole country may have its needs served, we must have people in the legislatures and in the services who are able to appreciate and provide for the needs of every member of the community, when our electors are careful and wise and unselfish in the selection of representatives in the legislatures, and the Government equally careful and wise in the selection of officers for the public services, so that neither the electors nor the members of the Government forget in providing for their own needs, their own requirements and their own benefits, the larger interests of the country they serve. We look forward to the time of a general awakening to a sense of public interests, and the duty on the part of electors to look to the general welfare of the whole of the country, when every person thinks of every other person and the needs of all be served by each.”

THE RESULT

The quest for unity had gone in vain. The differences between the two great communities of India had become, in the passage of time, sharper and more bitter than they were at the end of 1928. Neither the Congress, with all the best efforts of its latter-day leaders to win over the Muslims, nor any other party in the country had succeeded in healing the breach. Pious wishes of a Viceroy like Lord Irwin, or fasting and prayers of a Mahatma like Mr. Gandhi, had proved of no avail.

The granting of separate communal electorates to the Muslims with additional weightage in their favour even in provinces where they were in a majority had not improved matters. The leaders had failed, and the Government had not used their authority ‘to

CHAPTER XII

THE STATUTORY COMMISSION

The wisdom and foresight of the Liberal Party and its courage to stand up to its convictions, were never better evinced than in the attitude that it took up towards the purely Parliamentary Commission appointed by the Conservative Government of England in 1927. The Commission was to examine the working of the Government of India Act of 1919, and to report what further steps should be taken to fulfill the pledge given to India in the August Declaration of 1917. The pledge was of a two-fold character—(1) the association of Indians in all branches of the administration; and (2) the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India. The preamble to the Act of 1919, contained the provision that a Statutory Commission shall be appointed, at the latest, at the end of 10 years to revise the constitution, and, presumably, to take India one long step further on the road to responsible government. The condition of the advance lay in the proof of co-operation given, and nowhere was it suggested in the preamble that the Commission to be appointed for that purpose shall be a purely Parliamentary or a purely White Commission.

If the Conservative Cabinet of Mr. Baldwin was such a stickler for the set words in the preamble, it should not have appointed the proposed commission even a day earlier than the date stipulated for in the Act. But when it suited its purpose it neglected to abide by the time-limit, and excused itself for appoint-

for a principle that appealed practically to all right-minded leaders in the country and it achieved its object. It did not claim that triumph for itself, but for the country as a whole and for the principle by which it had stood all the time.

The boycott of the Commission by the liberal party was distinguished from the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in 1921, as sponsored by the Congress. The Liberals simply said that "they shall have nothing to do with a Commission on which Indians were not appointed to work as equals. They will lead no evidence before such a commission, nor play to them any inferior role as the so-called committees of the Central and provincial Legislatures were later on discovered to play." They resented the position forced upon India by the exclusion of Indians as equal members of the Commission, which made it appear that she was on her trial before the White men who constituted it, and that "Indians were no better than school boys to be promoted from form to form on the periodical recommendation by their teachers and examiners." Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in his presidential address to the Liberal Conference of 1927 fully dealt with the position, and it is to that address that we have to turn in order to understand to-day the history of the whole question.

But before we do so we must refer to some pertinent remarks on the question in the address of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who was Chairman of the Reception Committee of that year's momentous conference. Said he about the opposition to the Simon Commission,

"The opposition to the Simon Commission was led not by fire-eaters and irreconcilables but by many distinguished Indians, who, undeterred by any popular clamour and at considerable personal sacrifice, had come forward to work the Reforms Act at a very critical period and had stead-

Mother India had poisoned it against India. The Conservative Government in England had chosen precisely that time to forestall the appointment of the Statutory Commission by two years. It had, besides, made it an exclusively parliamentary and all white commission, which was not clearly laid down in the preamble to that Act. The Anglo-Indian papers seemed to be in the know of the arrangement, though Indians were never consulted about it. Even names of members had been prematurely disclosed by some of them.

Taking all these facts into consideration Sir Tej Bahadur warned the authorities in advance, of the effect this step would have on the Indian mind in the following words:—

"I do not write as a party politician, but as one who feels that the task of endowing India with a permanent constitution worth her place in the Empire and commensurate with her legitimate aspirations, should not be approached in the narrow spirit of party politics or actuated by old time prejudices. It is for this reason that I have ventured to sound the warning against the view entertained in certain quarters that an exclusively parliamentary commission should be appointed." That was what Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote in June 1927. He added:—"Such a commission if appointed might start on its work with the very handicap that it will not carry with it Indian confidence and support, and that there was nothing in the words of the Statute to show that Parliament cannot appoint Indians to such a commission or it is bound to appoint those who happen to be its members."

How did they dare flout the warning so expressed on behalf of India long before the Commission was announced and appointed by Parliament? It was, as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru put it in his presidential address,

"In the belief and hope that the outburst of indignation and discontent in India would be a short-lived one; that the Swarajists were more interested in nursing grievances than in having them removed, and that, therefore,

cation of *Mother India*, which was, to say the least of it, not playing the game." Miss Mayo's *Mother India*, as we all know, was written to show to the world that India's claim to self-government was not justified by conditions of the social and moral world in India. The controversy that had raged round the book at the time, with Lala Lajpat Rai's reply to it in another book describing similar or worse conditions in America, need not occupy us here. Suffice it to say that Mr. Gandhi finished Miss Mayo's book once for all by describing it as "a drainage inspector's report," and "as the drains of a city are not the city, so the things described in Miss Mayo's *Mother India* are not the whole of India or the real India."

As regards the communal argument against the appointment of Indians as members on the commission Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru met it effectively as follows:—

"If it be really the fact that the position is so hopeless as the Secretary of State in the House of Lords and Lord Winterton in the House of Commons have made it out to be, then in the name of common sense and fairness I ask what is the good of appointing a Commission? Why entertain talk of Reforms? Why not follow the advice of a distinguished member of the European Community in Calcutta who had the frankness and courage to say not many days ago that 'the time has now come for the Viceroy to sit down with his selected district officers who knew the real people of India and evolve a decent system of Government forgetting democracy and all such discredited systems.'"

And who, pray, were the members chosen to sit in judgment over the political destiny of India? None of the recognised front-bench leaders. But rapporteurs—to quote the "London Times"—men in the second rank with the single exception of Sir John Simon perhaps.

Indian delegation after the third R.T.C. face to face with the Joint Select committee, presided over by Lord Linlithgow, had borne out fully the truth of this observation by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru made in 1927. It was sheer "bamboozling" to say what Lord Birkenhead and Ramsay Macdonald had said about the Committee of the Central Legislature, "enjoying the same status, constitutional or otherwise, either with the Simon Commission or with the Joint Select Committee of Parliament to follow it."

And here we may quote the words of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald as reported by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru:—

"He talked about the Indian Legislative Assembly as the Parliament of India, and he observed that the Parliament of England was saying to the Parliament of India, 'we are going to regard you as the representative of the Indian opinion, we are going to recognise you as having an authority, sanction and position like unto our own in your own country, and when we want to know what is going to be the constitution of India in future, when we want to know what the political opinion of India is, we appoint a commission, you appoint a similar body, and the two commissions working together in harmonious co-operation with each other are going to report to the House of Commons what the lines of the new constitution should be."

In the same breath, in the same speech, and, at the end of it, the same speaker said, "they could not give the commission of the Indian Legislature any right to make a report to the House of Commons." Fatuity could go no further than this, and yet we were asked to take these words seriously! Fine words butter no parsnips.

"The raging, tearing, propaganda" against the Commission was being carried on, said Lord Winter- ton, the then Under-Secretary of State for India, in the House of Commons, "by certain persons who were always opposed to the Government of India." Sir Chi-

measures and resolutions recommended by the Legislative Assembly and even reports of certain important Committees had been held up at White Hall since the exit of Mr. Montagu from the India Office and since the entrance there of Conservative Secretaries of State like Lord Peel and Lord Birkenhead down to 1927, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru told Mr. Baldwin frankly that all his compliments to them as statesmen did not help them to forget the last straw which had been the appointment of the Statutory Commission. He said,

"I do not think a worse challenge has been thrown out ever before to Indian nationalism, and notwithstanding the profuse assurances in Mr. Baldwin's speech and yet more profuse assurances in Mr. Macdonald's speech, Indian nationalists of the Moderate School have been compelled to ask if the only way of recognising the spirit to co-operation is by telling Indians that their lot is to be none other than that of petitioners; that they cannot be trusted to participate in the responsibility of making recommendations to Parliament for the future of their own country; and that, all that they may aspire to is to put their proposals before the commission which may accept or reject them; and again, to repeat the same process of persuasion, argument, discussion before the Joint Committee of Parliament. Now, if this is what is meant by co-operation, if this is the new idea of the equality of status on which we are to be fed, if our patriotism is a prejudice and if the patriotism of the seven members of Parliament is to be treated as impartial justice, then we liberals feel justified in telling the Government here and in England, 'You may do anything you like in the assertion of your right as supreme power, but we are not going to acquiesce in the method of dealing with us.' Neither self-respect nor our sense of duty to the country can permit us to go near the Commission."

From this elucidation of the whole question it is clear, even as a matter of history, how Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Liberal Party were perfectly justified in giving the lead that they had given in 1927 to the country that "it should have nothing to do with such



Sir Cowasji Jehangir
(President 1936)



Sir Vithal Chandavarkar
(President 1940)



Sir B. P. Singh Roy
(President 1941)



Sir Maharaj Singh
(President 1943)

thankless tasks of party factions and squabbles; and I honestly think that the time has come when we should make an earnest and honest endeavour to open a new chapter in our history. I do not plead for the sudden merging of one party into another. But I do plead for common and joint work through chosen representatives of each party in the preparation of a scheme of self-government to be presented to the country and Parliament."

Mrs. Annie Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill was an attempt of the kind by the National Convention held at Madras in 1924. Fate did not prove propitious to that bill for the reason that a famous Congress Swarajist, on the eve of its introduction in Parliament, torpedoed it by a wire that his party did not accept it on behalf of India. Sir Tej Bahadur's appeal fructified later in the shape of an All Parties' Convention in which the Congress took the lead with Dr. Ansari as its spokesman. The result was the document known as the Nehru Report, so called because the sub-committee which prepared it had for its chairman Pandit Motilal Nehru. The Convention in eight sittings at Lucknow, and the All Parties' Conference at Calcutta after it, had approved the report in its fundamentals, and had accepted 'Dominion Status' as the united demand of India. But the communal part of it eventually proved its Achilles' heel, with the ultimate fate for it which we have narrated in a former chapter.

This study will not be complete without reference in it to salient points in the two speeches at the Conference, namely, of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer and Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. The former proposed the resolution of the Conference on the Statutory Commission, and the latter spoke last upon it.

As regards the dignified and unique status alleged to have been bestowed upon the Committee of the Indian Legislature, of which some persons in Parliament spoke so grandiloquently as being never confer-

inspite of all the declarations that the Government in India is on the road to transformation into full responsible government, in the face of all these I charge the British Government that they have shown themselves, during the last 5½ years since Mr. Montagu was driven out of office so unceremoniously, incapable of any sense of responsibility to the people in dealing with the problems of Indian Government. If there was an Indian on the Commission this question would be brought up and the Commission would not be allowed merely to consider the problem as though Indians were the accused and the British Government were to give judgment in favour of their own noble selves."

Then, again, he quoted precisely, to point out the intention of Mr. Montagu in instituting the procedure of the Statutory Commission. Said Mr. Chintamani that Mr. Montagu in his speeches on the Government of India Bill in the House of Commons had made three important statements which it was very relevant that we should remind the British Government about, at that juncture:

"He asked the House of Commons first, to remember that the Government of India Bill of that year was only the first step on the road of self-government. Secondly, he asked the Government of India to remember, although the Governors-in-Council and the Governor-General-in-Council were not then made legally responsible to their respective Legislatures,—that they were the Government of a country which had been promised full responsible government, the first step in the direction of which had already been taken, and that, therefore, they should conduct themselves even in the reserved spheres as though they were already responsible to the Legislatures; in other words, that the spirit which should inform the Government of the country not merely in provincial transferred departments but throughout the whole sphere of administration must be the spirit of a government representative of and responsible to the people of the country. The third thing which he told the House of Commons was that they should be on their guard against employing arguments against

sion may say or do, they will be deprived of the moral authority which we shall have only presented to them if we co-operated."

That, by the end of 1929, as the result of this policy on the part of India, the Simon Commission, with all its fanfaronnading, had lost its moral authority, had become clear to Lord Irwin in India and to the Labour Government in England, is evident from the fact that they tried to appease the country by the announcement of the Round Table Conference.

The high promises held forth about the Simon Commission, after all, came to nought. Exactly ten years after, Mr. Chintamani wrote of its work for India as follows:—

"The Commission's inquiries aroused but little interest in the country, and when its belated report was produced in 1930, it amazed Indians by some of its astounding proposals. India was not to have Dominion Status, she was not to have a responsible Central Government. The present Legislative Assembly (1937) must give place to a body indirectly elected which could be trusted to be more acquiescent in executing decrees. The Army of India was to be under the control of His Majesty's Government in England, India however paying for its cost. It is needless to say more upon this portentous document than that Sir Siva Swami Aiyer, of all people, dismissed it with the remark that it 'should be placed on the scrap-heap.'"

Thus had 'God's own Englishmen' solved, once for all, the political problem of India and had substituted peace and goodwill where, before, had reigned discontent, distrust, dissension and disunion, all round!

ed the first meeting of the R.T.C. in England. In 1931 the atmosphere had changed in India and Gandhi-Irwin Pact was the consequence thereof. The Congress had agreed at last to share in the deliberations of the Second Round Table Conference.

The Liberal Conference at Allahabad dealt mainly with the question of Dominion Status, and *inter alia* with the Nehru Report and communal unity. It had to deal fully with the question of Dominion Status in 1928, because certain high officials of Government had interpreted responsible government to mean something different from that Status in their evidence before the Simon Commission, as well as, long before that, in the Legislative Assembly. On the other hand, there was a young party in the Congress itself which denounced that Status and went in for complete independence. The Nehru Report had embodied Dominion Status as the greatest common measure of agreement among all parties as regards India's demand. Hence, the Liberal Party had to make its position clear to the country on this vital point at a crucial moment in her history. And that task it accomplished in its Conference at Allahabad in 1928.

The change of atmosphere brought about in the country by united opposition to the Simon Commission, and by united effort by all parties, including the Congress and the Liberal Party, to frame a draft scheme for the future constitution of India was referred to by Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, speaking in the Liberal Conference in 1928, as follows:

"Those of us who have had pleasure to hear, and those who will read, Pandit Motilal Nehru's speech, will find in it, I submit, a vindication of the Liberal policy because, notwithstanding the enunciation of certain specific proposals, I still hold that Pandit Motilal Nehru's speech as President of the Congress, (1928) is, in effect and in essence, despite

mental reserve the unity in the country in support of the Nehru Report and especially in support of its basic principle of Dominion Status for India, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad did not mince words with those who said in 1928, that they could accept Dominion Status as well as, at the same time, work for complete independence. That was the stand of men in the Congress like Mr. Srinivasa Ayangar of Madras and Mr. Subashchandra Bose of Calcutta. Some of them had constituted themselves into a party in the Congress to work up the Congress to that aim. And they had their success at the end of 1929.

Referring to the new party in the Congress and outside, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad spoke as follows:—

“The Congress is asked as a compromise to accept the formula that, while re-affirming the Madras resolution of complete independence, Dominion Status is acceptable as a common measure of agreement. In the alternative, the Congress is asked to subscribe at present to Dominion Status but with the ultimatum that if it is not given within a stated period, then independence would be declared and non-co-operation would be started. To my mind, while every effort should be made to secure unity in politically-minded India such unity should not be a camouflage. Nothing makes for sound action in politics as does clarity of thought and avoidance of self-deception. Speaking for myself, I do not see how those whose immediate or ultimate goal is complete independence can have anything in common with those who want Dominion Status within the British Empire. Any nation or country that wants complete independence takes measures first to achieve independence, and when it succeeds in securing independence, it drafts and creates its own constitution. It is out of place for those who want independence outside the Empire to¹ join in drafting the constitution for Dominion Status and asking British Parliament to grant such Dominion Status. Those who want Dominion Status cannot countenance the ultimatum mentioned above. Those who affirm independence as their goal and threaten non-pay-

as president of the Liberal Conference in 1928, "that it had assumed in India a fictitious importance beyond its real merit. When the separatist principle was first accepted in 1909 and further confirmed in 1916, the agreement was entered into with the full expectation that separate electorates would last only for short time, and the principle should be confined only to the Legislatures. But what had happened? During 19 years the separatist idea had spread like wild weed (1928) and had extended itself to every field of public life—municipality, local bodies, public services and even seats of learning. And, as a result, so far as the services were concerned, fitness and efficiency as criterions had yielded place to considerations of birth, race and religion. And that was bound to act detrimentally on our national character in the long run. If this evil, that had spread its dark and ominous shade all over our public life, must go, we must attack the evil at its very root. Hence, we must agree to do away with separate communal electorates."

"The correct ideal," said Sir Chimanlal, "therefore, would be a general register of voters not taking account of birth, race or religion. All that any community should have and is entitled to have is that the constitution should secure to it fullest religious liberty and cultural autonomy. Failing the acceptance of this correct ideal, general electorates, with reservation of seats for the minority and the backward communities, is the next best expedient only as a transitional device. The fact is that the present situation in which the Mohomedan community want to cling to separate electorates as a valued privilege essential for their safety, has been created by want of trust and confidence between majority and the minority communities, and the situation is exploited by those who can maintain their predominance only by perpetuating communalism. I strongly think it is up to the majority community to be generous and to agree to make concessions to the furthest limits consistent with national interests, in order to win back their erring brethren of the minority community."

"It was in 1905 when Mr. Gokhale, as President of the Congress at Benares, first put forward the idea in a concrete form. In 1906, when Dadabhai Naoroji presided over the National Congress, he gave us the rich inheritance of a word which has remained with us as an ideal to be achieved in our own time. I was referring to the word Swaraj. It was again emphasised in 1908 by the Convention Committee of the Congress at Allahabad. And from 1921 onwards it had been the consistent aim of the liberal party. In 1924 and 1925, the Swaraj Party in the Assembly adopted the resolutions of the Liberal Party as its national demand. And the Nehru Report, finally, which also the Congress and all parties at the time had adopted as their own, was drawn up as a united political demand of the country on the basis of Dominion Status for India. To sum up the history of the question, so far as the liberal party was concerned, so far as several other parties were concerned, it may be said without any fear of contradiction that the idea of Dominion Status was an accepted idea."

As against this agreement in the country, there was growing up a school of thought which was not prepared to accept that Status but was urging the idea of independence. But the liberals and all others in the country, including even the Mohomedans, apart from the latter's disagreement on the communal issue, used the phrase, "without any equivocation, without any ambiguity, without any mental reservation." "What they meant by Dominion Status", said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, "was nothing more and at the same time nothing less than Dominion Status, not as a means to any other end, but as the end in itself." The extremist who swore by complete independence was, according to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the product of the Government policy so far, not to move forward.

WAS IT NOT REPRESENTATIVE?

The Government, he warned, might very well treat this opinion with indifference and contempt on

ed from generation to generation, that it had changed in every decade, that every Imperial Conference which had met in England had made a contribution to the growth and development of the idea of Dominion Status, until you found that the Imperial Conference of 1926 meeting in London and coming to some conclusions which had given the self-governing dominions even the liberty to separate themselves, if they liked, from England. He, then, significantly added that they could not have a larger and better idea than that.

"If the Dominions have not separated, if the dominions will not separate from England, it was because they felt that in their own homes they were absolute masters. They could shape their own policy, they could pass their own laws, and they could have their own tariffs. It was because they felt that they occupied a position of perfect equality with England, that they were in truth and fact equal members of the British Commonwealth, that they considered it necessary to remain members of the British Commonwealth. Dominion Status, therefore, implied perfect independence within and a sure protection from aggression without. To cut oneself off from the British Commonwealth, which meant isolation, was a situation fraught with danger for India."

To others who doubted that what was granted to the white colonies can never be given to India, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru replied,

"It was simply an argument of despair; it implied and it meant that if these be the suspicions which were being harboured by English statesmen in England and India, then the talk of responsible government, and of dominion status was nothing but a sham and delusion, and that in as much as we cannot have a common history, common religion, common ties of blood, it followed that all the declarations that had been made by English statesmen on behalf of Dominion Status must be taken as paper declarations."

remove the common misunderstandings, if once we can show to the minorities and show to them most unmistakably, that the minorities stand to gain everything and lose nothing under a system of responsible self-government, if we can adjust our social questions, if we can broaden our ideas of economic questions, if we can bring about a general amount of unanimity on vital national questions, I personally think you will not require any other sanction, because I feel absolutely persuaded on one point, and it is that the Englishman is such a practical-minded, business-like sort of man, that when he once comes to know that India is indeed in earnest about dominion status and responsible government, he will not wait for other sanctions. He will come to you and say 'Now come to a settlement.' Therefore, when my young friends talk of other sanctions, I always remind them that just the very first sanction that has got to be forged by us is the sanction of unity, the removal of those differences which have disfigured our public life, the removal of those differences which have rent our society into pieces, and if any effort is made in bringing about that harmony, in bringing about that co-operation between one section of Indian Society and another section, I venture to say, not only on behalf of my humble self but on behalf of my party, that you will find the liberals standing shoulder to shoulder with every other party whatever may be its label in the country."

Following Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer gave another reason why India demanded Dominion Status forthwith. He said that from their experience they had found that without an essential national bias and a national outlook they could not reconstruct their national wealth, and a bankrupt nation, a poor nation, a starving nation could not be a fit sister among the sisterhood of nations. It was that national wealth and prosperity that they were seeking to build up. That was why they were asking for Dominion Status.

OTHER OBJECTIONS

To those who trotted out the argument that the division of India into two warring communities had

fend herself? The argument is that England should stand aside when India is being attacked by somebody from the North, East or West, and then we cannot with Satyagraha meet those people. You must have your army and your navy, and as you have not got it, you cannot have dominion status. Let the same argument be applied to Australia. How many minutes will it take for Australia to be overrun if England stands aside. If it is to-day when Australia has really built up her own navy, what was it when Australia was given Dominion Status? These arguments are merely pretexts to refuse our demand."

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer spoke in 1928, and the truth of it has been borne in upon us more deeply in the present war. Australia's isolation from the British Commonwealth of Nations would have made her an easy prey to the invasion of Japan. Her dominion status had given her by right the protection of the British Empire and England. With what earnestness and vehemence, as we know, did the Australian premier insist on help from Great Britain and from her ally America, against the menace of Japan? It is recorded that Australia was paying only £380,000 out of the 3 or 4 million necessary for her defence at the time and long after she was given Dominion Status. India's army may not be a national army, she may have no navy. But she foots a bill which is very heavy and she has maintained the army for a good long time, to have the right to claim Dominion Status and claim along with it the defence of her sea frontiers by the British Navy as an integral member of the Empire. The war today has entirely changed the outlook on the question. But prejudice dies hard and, therefore, history has to be recalled in order to induce reason to overcome it.

About sanctions, supporting Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer said,

"When all is said and done, take it from me that sanctions, such as are constantly invoked, would do much less

CHAPTER XIV

THE 1929 DECLARATION

The protest of the Liberal Party in its own behalf, as also on behalf of those who were of its own way of thinking against the appointment of the Simon Commission, and its insistence upon Dominion Status for India as the only way out of the political impasse, had told. Its appeal to the Viceroy not to entrench himself behind official advice but to take proper note of public feeling in the country had gone home. And the outcome of it was the famous announcement by Lord Irwin as the Viceroy of India, on the 30th October 1929. It had conceded the Indian demand for Dominion Status and it had accepted its proposal for the Round Table Conference between the representatives of British government and the representatives of India to settle the future constitution of India by free discussion as equals, and without any previous commitment except as to the fundamental of responsible government which was nothing less and nothing more than Dominion Status.

The big gesture of statesmanship to be followed by action, which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had suggested as the only and the right means of conciliating India, had been made, and the credit for it must go to Lord Irwin alone, who, though with a conservative mind, had the genius and the sympathy to act towards England as the true interpreter of public opinion in India, and to urge a step that marked an entire break from the policy of stagnation that had characterised the re-

ed a resolution that India must have complete independence."

DIVIDED COUNSEL

It was in this atmosphere of divided counsel in the country that the Liberal Conference met at Madras at the end of 1929 under the presidentship of Sir Phiroz Sethna to do what it could to bring about in the country an attitude of mind that would enable those who went to the Conference to make its decisions as fruitful of good to the country, as their united efforts could help them to do so. The Liberals insisted that the sitting of the Conference should be held in London as early in 1930 as possible, at least it should not be delayed beyond 1930, and that its decisions should be arrived at while Lord Irwin continued to be the Viceroy of India, and that, if feasible, his term of office should be extended that he might complete the work he had so well begun. As it happened, the R.T.C. was not convened earlier than in November 1930, and its decisions proved to be far from final.

What contribution did the Liberal Conference make in its session of 1929, so far as it lay in its power, to clear thinking and proper patriotic action? Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer as Chairman of the Reception Committee devoted his whole speech, first, to define clearly the position of his party *vis-a-vis* the recent announcement; and, secondly, to answer objections raised by certain diehards in England, in Parliament and outside, to the decision taken together by the Viceroy of India, and the new Secretary of State for India in England.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer adduced argument in favour of the announcement by quoting Mr. Benn himself against his opponents. He said,

"Mr. Benn had said that Dominion Status of India had been partially in action from 1919, and, therefore, she

almost unparalleled Strong measures are necessary. We have to put forth all our effort to exercise the utmost wisdom and circumspection and then take the utmost possible care that no element or factor which can at all be called into alliance with us should be either neglected or forgotten."

THE APPEAL

The need for such united effort was all the greater because the Congress was holding aloof and had thus suddenly let down both Lord Irwin and Mr. Benn. That caused a situation to arise in which, said Mr. Sastri, they might well ask themselves, 'Are we justified in going forward with this policy? Which party in India are we going to satisfy? If the Congress party will have nothing to do with Dominion Status and will not come along to prepare a Dominion constitution, whom shall we expect to perform the task?' 'Are there in India,' they may well ask themselves, 'any people comparable at all with the Indian National Congress in numbers, in authority, in power to control the masses of India? Are there people whom hitherto we have recognised as representing the authentic voice of India?'

"But if our champions in England feel a doubt and hesitancy, as they well may," continued Mr. Sastri, "there are others who would urge them to drop the forward policy, to have nothing more to do with India and India's politicians, and to let things be where they are, causing, as we know, profound dissatisfaction and confusion, and threatening to throw the country into a stage which may be scarcely distinguished from turmoil of a very bad complexion indeed." "Now, ladies and gentlemen," he concluded "just think, is it not necessary for somebody, for some organisation, in India, to stand forward in this crisis and to say to these British friends of ours:—'For Heaven's sake, go ahead with your policy; if the Congress has failed you,

throws greater responsibility upon, and, I would add, gives wider opportunity, to those who are prepared to face and solve difficulties in a constructive spirit. It is certainly no reason why His Majesty's Government should be deflected from their declared intention to call representatives of India to their Counsels."

Earlier he had expressed his regret over the Congress decision as follows:—

"I had greatly hoped that leaders of Indian opinion would have been unanimous in accepting the hand of friendship proffered by His Majesty's Government and so taken advantage of an opportunity unprecedented in India's history. All history is the tale of opportunities seized or lost, and it is one of its chief functions to teach us with what fatal frequency men have allowed opportunities to pass them by, because it may be that the opportunity presented itself in a form different from that which they expected and desired. And history, it seems, is in danger of repeating itself to-day in certain quarters of India."

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer speaking on the same topic in the Liberal Conference of 1929 had said: "one cannot but regard the break-down of the Conference between the Viceroy and Gandhiji and others as one more instance of wasted opportunities."

In July of the year 1930 the Viceroy reverted to the topic and spoke to the Combined Legislatures,

"So far from desiring to secure so-called victory over a nationalist movement constitutionally pursued, I desire nothing more than to be able to help India so far as I can to translate her aspirations into a reality. I would ask what fairer method could be devised for this than the one by which all the various points of view can be sifted in discussion and when, not by majority voting but by the influence of mind upon mind in daily personal contact, a sustained attempt can be made to discover, once for all, the more excellent way in which Great Britain and India can walk together."

The Viceroy then announced the date of the Assembly

meeting of the Conference, and was against putting it off to the end of 1930 or to 1931, precisely for the reason that the later the date, the greater was the possibility of the Conference being overwhelmed by Tory influence. Events had proved the correctness of that forecast. The Conference in 1931 was of a different complexion than that in 1930. And that of 1932 which finally gave us the Act of 1935, was literally overwhelmed by "reactionary and Tory influence,"—the personification of which was no other than Sir Samuel Hoare himself.

AS A MATTER OF DUTY

It was with this message to the country that the Liberal Party had decided to participate in the Round Table Conference.. Not that it was unaware of the handicap it was labouring under as the result of Congress abstention from the Conference. But any appeal to them to come and join in the common task was, at the time, useless. And, therefore, they had to do 'their best for their country and according to their lights, even without the Congress to help them in that work.' That feeling was put before the Liberal Conference by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in the following words:

"I should have been very glad if our friends of the Congress had decided to go to the Round Table Conference. We should have been very willing, indeed, to co-operate with them in the common achievement of the common idea before us. We would have shouldered the burden with them, we should have found them a source of strength, and if I can say so, they could have depended upon our support. But they have taken their own line, and our responsibility on this occasion is all the greater to see that the other progressive elements in the country are preponderantly represented." And Sir Chimanlal Setalvad supporting him added, "if this offer of the Round Table Conference had been made in 1928 instead of the wretched creation of the Simon Commission and the manner in

CHAPTER XV

THE INDIAN ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The Indian Round Table Conference met in London for the first time on November 12, 1930. It carried on business in plenary sessions and through committee-work for nine weeks. And it concluded its work on the 19th of January 1931 with a final speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. There were nine sub-committees appointed by the Conference of which, perhaps, the most important was the Federal Structure Committee with Lord Sankay as its Chairman, and, of which the least successful was the minorities Committee presided over by the Prime Minister. Much spade work was done and views recorded at these sub-committees, but nothing final was done by them or in them. Except for the general agreement on an All-India Federation, responsibility at the Centre, provincial autonomy, and safeguards—and these in broad general outline—nothing definite was undertaken or pledged as binding upon the British Government on the one hand, and on the Indian delegates on the other.

The seventy representatives from India included more than ten for the Indian states, and the rest spoke for British India. The delegates from British India were either party politicians, or politicians whose one interest lay in securing as much as they could for the minorities as the price to be paid for their consent to Dominion Status for India. As it proved since, in

these drawbacks glaringly though Mr. Gandhi attended it on behalf of the Congress and as its sole representative. At its conclusion the helplessness of the Indian delegation face to face with the minority problem, became evident to the whole world. Soon after, the Congress went into wilderness once more, and the Third R.T.C. became a close preserve for Tory and reactionary element in England, and for the communalists in India, so that the Reform Act, its offspring, though it had embodied provincial autonomy, proved to be a caricature of what was expected of the announcement of October 1929.

The Act promised to bring in an All-India Federation far different in spirit and substance from what was visualised, at the end of 1930. What made matters still worse, was that even that Federation was not to be an instant step but a remote possibility. Federation thus became a bone of contention in India from 1937 onwards. The Mahomedans would not have it, the Princes paced reluctantly towards it, and the Congress was out to wreck it, though it had agreed to take upon itself the task of working autonomy in the provinces which really meant responsibility in the provinces coupled with autocracy at the Centre.

As it happened ultimately the Government dilly-dallied with it, the Princes looked askance at it, and the Muslims vetoed it. The materialisation of provincial autonomy without responsibility at the Centre led to division, disunion, controversy and dissension throughout the country. The high-handedness at the Centre had its counter-part in high-handedness in the provinces, so that autocracy and rank communalism had an easy march in the country over sane constitutionalism and democracy—that is government with the consent of the people, and with the co-operation of all parties concerned. This state of things conti-

and Sir Cowasji Jehangir was selected to represent his community and business.

The best work that the liberals did was done by them, and to some purpose at least, at the First Round Table Conference.

THE MOOT-QUESTION

The Conference opened with a message from the King Emperor, and subsequently the Prime Minister was elected the President of the Conference. Then was formed the Business Committee of the Conference which was given full freedom to determine every arrangement that concerned its business. The first item which it took up for discussion was whether the future constitution of India was to be unitary or federal. As Mr. Chintamani put it in his presidential address at the Liberal Conference held in Bombay in July 1931, "this first decision affected and influenced all subsequent proceedings," and not to India's advantage. The liberals were not slow to perceive how it meant diversion from what they had expected as the result of the Conference.

Mr. Chintamani put it, as follows:—

"There were some of us who thought, among them Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, that the Conference should rather get to grips at once with the matter that was uppermost in the Indian mind and for which we went to England braving the wrath of large numbers of our countrymen viz: Dominion Status with a Responsible Central Government for British India. In my humble opinion there is cause for regret that the advocates of this opinion failed and the Business Committee's decision prevailed."

The Liberals did their utmost to bring about unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, so that the disagreement among them may not be a bar to constitutional progress. Regarding these efforts Mr. Chintamani says,

no such solidarity among its non-Muslim delegates.

Was the Conference, then, a success? In Mr. Chintamani's words, "it was neither a success nor a failure," and for the following reasons:—

"It was not a success because it stood adjourned before it could record a decision on a solitary question. Disbelieve and disregard every statement to the contrary. The Conference in its last plenary session had but one resolution laid before it, and it definitely affirmed only this, that the work on which it had been engaged should be continued without interruption. It acknowledged the value of the reports of the sub-committees, but recorded no decision on the merits of a single subject of which these reports treated. But the Conference was not a failure either. Its deliberations in sub-committees and committee and in plenary sessions were enlightening and useful and it promoted a good understanding between the statesmen of England and the public men of India. Above all, it created an atmosphere of goodwill such had not existed, I was assured, at any previous time after the never-to-be-forgotten Mr. Montagu was forced out of the India Office, and not often before. Immediate disappointments may be many and serious, but on a long view of things it is my conviction that the Conference has on the whole done good service, and even if success may not crown its effort it will have paved the way to easier and surer success at a later date than if it had not been convoked. If the last session of the Conference had been nothing but a failure from India's standpoint, would Mahatma Gandhi have thought that there was a *prima facie* case for a reconsideration of the Congress position, and courted the Viceroy to invite him, if he will forgive me to quote his own words, for those memorable talks which resulted in the Irwin-Gandhi settlement?"

AN ALL-INDIA FEDERATION

The King in opening the Conference had given the following message:—"Each of you will, with me, be profoundly conscious how much depends for the whole of the British Commonwealth on the issue of your consultations." The British side of the delega-

He identified himself and his order with the aspirations of British India—

“that passion for an equal status in the eyes of the world, expressed in the desire for Dominion Status which is the dominant force amongst all thinking men to-day. India must be united on a federal basis. The constitution must be federal and while the princes could not in any way be coerced, they would come into an all-India Federation of their own free will, provided their rights are guaranteed.”

The Princes went even further. They were willing to consider an immediate Federation on two conditions. As the Nawab of Bhopal put it, “we can only federate with a self-governing and federal British India. The Central Government must cease, they asserted, to be a purely official government, and must become responsible to the Central Legislature.”

This concord between the Princes and the Indian representatives in the Conference “created a common united India front” in favour of the immediate grant of Dominion Status. And the British representatives could no longer either prevaricate or sit on the fence. Lord Reading on their behalf accepted the proposal of an all-India Federation with responsibility at the Centre. And that started the constructive work of the first R.T.C. under nine sub-committees. It is no use to-day going into the details of that work, for India has, in political thinking and outlook, gone much beyond what these committees did and yet had failed to implement their proposals in the Act that had followed them. We only select from the general discussion at the First R.T.C. such aspects of that work as may help to bring out clearly the share that the Liberals had in shaping it.

While we are on the initial part of the work we should not omit to mention the fact that the Muslim minority, at this stage, sounded no discordant note on

its consummation, to collide and even to weaken each other. I do hope that in the deliberations of the Committees, to which we shall consign these topics, nothing will be done on the side of those who care for federation more than for dominion status to weaken the latter, just as nothing should be done on the side of those who care for Dominion Status more than for Federation to weaken federation."

These words were spoken in 1930 and we are in 1944 and we have neither Dominion Status for British India nor Federation for United India. A warning note this, highly prophetic, which today must be taken to heart also by the apostles of complete independence who, to win it, are out to unite themselves in wedlock with the Pakisthanists of Muslim or any other variety! Misery doth make strange bed-fellows we know; but history should warn all of us before we prefer to part company with reason and commonsense.

SAFE-GUARDS

We may next refer to Sir Phiroz Sethna, a business man and liberal, a Parsi and no communalist, who gave an effective answer to Lord Peel on the question of the safeguards, one of the crucial points raised at the Conference. "Stiffen the safeguards"—that was the watchword of the British Conservatives at the Conference, which, later on, Sir Samuel Hoare glossed over "as mere hedges and not a wall in the way of progress." Commercial safeguards in favour of British trade in India were too much insisted upon at an early stage of the discussion. Currency and Exchange were to be the special charge of the Governor-General so that India's credit may be maintained in the British market. So also with regard to finance, as if responsible Indians in charge of these high matters would not care for it. Indians if left to themselves would monopolise all business and drive away British trade from India. Hence the need for commercial safeguards. Indian incompetence and Indian

its other services. Again, it must not be forgotten that India pays to the tune of £4,000,000 annually in the way of pensions both civil and military, to Europeans." He concluded on the question of safeguards and monopolies as follows:—

"What do we ask for? As Mr. Jinnah pointed out we want to be masters in our own house. We do not want to rob our European friends of their vested interests, but I would ask this Conference to remember that the vested interests were created by them, when the Indians had not the ghost of a chance to come in. Are we asking you to do anything more than you are doing in your own country? Because you discovered that the British Cinema film industry was not getting along as well as it ought to be doing, you imposed a quota. Then there was another case of the electrical company in regard to which you laid down by law that the percentage of shares held by the Britishers must be no less than 51 per cent, so that its control may vest with you. I sincerely trust that when we go back with a constitution which will help us politically and economically, we Indian and European merchants will stand together side by side for the advancement of India and England and, consequently of the Empire."

PROGRESS BY STAGES!

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, speaking after Sir Phiroz Sethna, referred to the stock argument of progress by stages, which, by the way, was the recommendation of the Simon Commission and which, at the Conference, some British members did seek to introduce by the side door. Sir Chimanlal dismissed that argument by quoting the ejaculation of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru—"Bogus"—when it was uttered at the Conference Table. And then he developed his own case as follows. One of the suggestions even about full provincial autonomy was that there should be official ministers. Setalvad answered, "if you call that provincial autonomy you may, but I do not call it genuine or real provincial autonomy at all." And then he went on,

"Those who say 'go slowly, do not quicken the pace'

of loyalty and ordered progress? Believe me, they are not hereditary criminals; they are not savage barbarian hordes; they are not the sworn enemies of Great Britain or of British Institutions. They are men of culture, men of honour, most of them; men who have made their mark in the professions; they are our kinsmen both in spirit and by blood. It is a sense of political grievance that has placed them in this position, which we view with so much distrust and so much disapprobation. Remove the discontent and you will find them alongside of you, working the new constitution that we shall frame to its highest issues, and drawing from these new institutions that we frame all the benefits of which they are capable."

He concluded, that the declaration of India as a Dominion will serve a double purpose; it will satisfy the natural desire, nay, the intense craving of Indians to be reckoned as equal partners in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It will be a sure earnest of the fulfilment of the promise that England desired India to be, in fulness of time, a full-pledged dominion; he was not without hope that the Indians and English will then labour whole-heartedly together for the happiness and prosperity of India. The happiness and prosperity of India meant greater happiness and prosperity for England."

And if England failed in this high mission what will happen? That also was plainly told to the Conference by an Indian liberal, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. He warned them—the die-hards among the delegates—

"If you do not grant now what India wants, the position will be this; you will have to enter into a long-drawn struggle, increasing every day. You may put down disorder; you are bound to put it down, and you will do so; but at every stage, sooner or later, it will again break forth with increased vigour, and you cannot rule 320 million people continuously by force and by military power. I trust you will make a wise choice. You can make India discontented which will mean ruination for her and may mean ruination for England, or you can make now a contented India which will be the brightest jewel

had asserted that before long there would be a new "dominion" in the British Commonwealth of Nations enjoying an equal status with other dominions, and that would be no other than India.

Finally he reminded the Conference that though they were not writing on a clean slate, efficiency was not the only word that should be written on it. Prosperity, contentment, happiness, conciliation of the people were words more important than efficiency, without which efficiency itself had no meaning and no reality. "What was the characteristic of the bureaucratic system of Government in India?" Mr. Chintamani asked them. And he answered the question;

"It was a despotism of despatch boxes tempered by the occasional loss of keys, wherein Red tape was King and sealing wax Minister. If the Conference did not lead to the fruition of India's most legitimate hopes, then he shuddered to think of the future. The present system of government stood discredited. There was definitely an end of peace on the basis of the present system in India, and statesmanship, which was the foresight of commonsense, must recognise the wisdom of avoiding a crisis and solving the problem in a friendly spirit."

The Prime Minister who spoke last at the first plenary session of the Conference stressed the value of the speeches made under three heads. First, they had led to the recognition of a status. As he put it, "It is impossible to go back, to pass a pen through the last four or five days and to declare in any man's vanity that it never existed." Secondly, the speeches made have not stated problems for the purposes of debate, "We have gone past that. We are not here for debate; we are here for action. We have to face practical requirements, in the spirit of a man who says "Yes there is a difficulty, come on, let us go over it." And he alluded in that light to what he called 'reserved.' He said,

be allowed to come at any time within the purview of the Federal Government. These were the three snags in the way of India which, in the end, proved not hedges along two sides of the road leading to Dominion Status. They did prove, inspite of Sir Samuel Hoare's assurances to the contrary, walls across, that had blocked the advance to self-government. It was on these three points mainly that discussion went on in the detailed consideration of the report.

SOME PARTICULARS

Mr. Chintamani regretted at the start one feature that ran through the whole report, namely, that the most important matters had been left as open questions. Again, reservations at the Centre as regards Finance, Currency and Exchange were calculated to "satisfy none who called himself an Indian and who desired for Dominion Status." He said,

"If there was one matter on which Indian opinion was most keen, it was that India should be in a financial sense mistress of her own household. This report did not promise that to India; and to that extent I anticipate that nationalist opinion, not only the Congress opinion but nationalist opinion of a more moderate variety—will dissent from some conclusions come to here. Secondly, if, as was proposed by the Committee, the Executive could be removed from office only by two-thirds majority of the two houses together, then practically it means no responsible government for India but a rule by an irremovable executive on almost all occasions."

He answered Colonel Haskar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, both of whom seemed to approve of the arrangement, and described those who objected to it as constitutional purists, as follows:—

"I realise only too well that all these are matters dealt with by imperfect men in this imperfect manner. But, Sir, if the imperfections so overshadow the good points and to obscure them, then I think we shall not be guilty of purism if we express our dissatisfactions. On this point, Mr.

Relations, enquired if parts of them could not be immediately transferred to responsible ministers at the Centre without impairing the safety and the tranquillity of the country. Mr. Basu took up the matter where Mr. Jayakar had left it and suggested the appointment of trade commissioners along with pro-consuls and representatives as forming part of Foreign relations. At this point Mr. Chintamani interposed to say that the period of transition from reservation to complete control as regards Defence and Foreign Relations should be specified. It should not last too long. Of course, it cannot be too brief. That was said at the end of 1930. We are now in 1944, responsible government at the Centre has not yet materialised, whether it will be partial or complete is still in the lap of the Gods, although the present War has changed the whole aspect of things about the Indianisation of the Army and the military defence of India. Still the warning given then by Mr. Chintamani, especially the first part of it, is not out of time, even to-day.

Then Mr. Jayakar, supported by Mr. Jinnah and Dr. Moonje, made it clear that the Ministers chosen by the Viceroy, even for reserved portfolios like those of Defence and Foreign Relations, and responsible to him alone during the transition period, should be non-official, elected members of the Central Legislature. Again, the special powers to be vested in the Governor-General, said Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Jinnah and Dr. Moonje, and to which liberals agreed, should be exercised by him "only in the case of grave emergency which was likely to endanger the peace and tranquillity of the country." He should have no power to legislate by ordinances. Mr. Jinnah said emphatically, "I agree to no other power in the Governor-General." As regards Currency and Exchange all Indians were of opinion that "the only safeguard was the Reserve

Chambers in the Central Government, though the liberals as a body would not have bi-cameral system introduced in the provinces. The members in the Upper House were to be from 100 to 150 and in the Lower House from 300 to 350. As the question of the minorities had remained yea unsolved and as adult suffrage was out of question, the proportion of members could not be then fixed for important and the so-called minority communities. The States had insisted that they would nominate their own members. In that respect a liberal like Mr. Ramachandra Rao insisted that even if that concession was made, it should not be made for all time. So also if separate electorates were inevitable for the Muslims, in the circumstances of the situation, they should not also be accepted as a permanent feature of the Indian constitution.

Joint Electorates with reservation of seats for minorities during the transition period without undue weightage—that should be the ideal solution of the communal tangle and in the best and the ultimate interest, not only of the majority but of the minority community as well. Again, those who chose to offer themselves for election, inspite of separate electorates, through the joint general electorates should be allowed to do so, so that, in course of time, people could discover for themselves the merits and advantages of the latter over the former. That was the view-point pressed at the Conference by the Liberal Party generally and in the sub-committee for minorities by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad especially. But there was no agreement on the question at the end of the first R.T.C. Matters became still worse at the end of the Second R.T.C. So this percentage as well as the method of election were left to be decided, in the end, by the Government in England. And we know what shape it had ultimately taken in the Act of 1935.

We know by experience how law and order were administered during the Congress regime from 1937 to 1939, and how the Congress ministries systematically opposed the separation of judicial and executive functions. On the other hand, they monopolised executive power and interfered with the judiciary from time to time, in a manner that no bureaucrat would have dared to follow. They refused to give due consideration to the representation of minorities in their cabinets—especially in the U.P. and the Bihar Provinces. Whatever the safeguards, they were seldom utilised by the Governors to obstruct the ministers. Prohibition, expropriation of lands—as in the famous Bardoli case with which the names of Sirdar Garda on the one hand, the ryot on the other—and Mr. Ramchandra Bhatt between them—will ever be associated, the imposing of the property tax to make up the deficit in provincial finance, and the banning of all criticism against it in the press and on the platform—these are all now matters of past history.

If the Federation and provincial autonomy had been started on their work simultaneously, the defects of both would have been overcome, and unity and self-government would have been by now an accomplished fact. It is fruitless, however, to explore this chapter of might-have-beens, when, today, the country is faced with a situation and a dead-lock much worse than what it was at the end of 1930.

RESUME

The first R.T.C. was the most important of all three. During the two years that followed, owing to changed political circumstances first in England and then in India, the experience of the two later Conferences was not unlike what an eminent publicist and leader of India of the past had said about such discus-

autonomy as the end of it all, had proved to be too true. And in 1937 India started with full autonomy in the Provinces, with Second Chambers in almost all of them, with ample safeguards to hedge it, and with no responsibility, not an element of it, in the Central Government.

minority question, inspite of long sittings held and concessions made, he had to confess at the end of them, that he was helpless.

However, to turn to Mr. Sastri's speech, he first expressed a suspicion in his mind that at the end of it all, India would get nothing from the Conferences beyond provincial autonomy, and that even, coupled with such safeguards as would make it, at the best, a truncated thing. He feared that at the Centre there was going to be no change at all till the States had come in and till the minority question had been settled. He appealed to the Prime Minister, with this fear in his mind, not to go back upon the promise definitely given at the end of 1930. And then he turned to Mr. Gandhi and addressed him as follows:—

“The thing is in our hands. The Imperial Parliament, dominated as it may be by a Conservative majority, the Imperial Parliament, in its debate tomorrow and the day after, will set its imprimatur on the declaration that the Prime Minister makes tomorrow—a few hours from now. Yes, and when that work is done, believe me, Mahatma, that, in your hand more than in those of any other single Indian lies our future progress. Remember the days when some of us here ran between Raisina and Daryagunj, bringing Lord Irwin and you together in mutual understanding and mutual co-operation. Yes, it seems to me that you cannot but have seen during these several weeks, that you have worked with us, that there is some knowledge, some wisdom, some patriotism even outside the ranks of the Congress which you so much worship.. Take us in hand. Do not dismiss us as people whose ideas are still evolving and may be long in reaching the heights of Congress wisdom. For the work of a great country like India, a growing nation like our people, lies in many directions. There is not one road to the salvation of our people, and patriotism takes many shapes and works in diverse ways as circumstances may require. The circumstances to-day require that you should change your plans, dismiss civil disobedience from your mind, and take up this work in a spirit of complete trust in us.”

Joint Parliamentary Committee's sittings and presented a Memorandum to it on the minimum of changes in the White Paper to make the Reforms acceptable to India, came back thoroughly disillusioned and bitterly disappointed. At the end of his speech in the plenary session of the third R.T.C., Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru used these words:—

“Whether the Conference will agree to our proposals or whether they will reject them I cannot say. If they do not agree, that will be their responsibility. We shall have done our duty and you will have done yours, and I, therefore, ask you whether you can afford to go on with this constitution without taking the largest possible measure of opinion with you in the country.”

Sapru referred, at the moment, to the Congress leaders who were then in jail. But it has its bearing also on what happened later—in the issue of the White Paper, its discussion in the joint Parliamentary Committee, and the Reform Act that came at the end of it. Sir Samuel Hoare had ejaculated, “let the dogs bark, the caravan moves on.” So was the Act shaped in entire defiance of the moderate opinion in India and with the single aim of placating the die-hards in the British House of Commons. The liberals by that time had been nowhere either with the Government or with the Congress. And yet they had to do their duty by the country, which they did in Conferences that met in 1933, 34 and 35. And it is with their work as critics of the White Paper, of the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, and of the Reforms Act, that had emerged out of them, that we are concerned in this study.

PROTEST

The Liberal Conference held at Calcutta was presided over by Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao. It had been specially convened to voice the protest of the Liberal Party against the conclusions embodied

who spoke on the special resolution on the subject, was offered with a full sense of this fact of the situation in their mind. The resolution was moved by Mr. Sastri and supported, among others, by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani. The White Paper was even worse in its defects than the forecast made of them in the presidential speech of Mr. Chintamani at the Liberal Conference of 1931, wherein he had reviewed critically what he felt was the outcome of the R.T.C. at the end of 1930. He had his fears about the safeguards; he had his fears about an All-India Federation, that might help to put off the demand of British India for Dominion Status; and he had his fears about the retention of control by the Secretary of State over the Government of India, not only so far as Defence and Foreign relations were concerned, but as regards the services and the commercial safeguards. We find these apprehensions expressed in his presidential address without fear or favour. And they were more than confirmed in the White Paper sponsored by Sir Samuel Hoare in 1932. And they all felt while speaking on the subject, "what was the use of it all?". And the reason for their outspoken criticism was put pointedly by Mr. Sastri in the passage we have quoted above.

CLOGS IN THE WHEEL

The White Paper was, more than anything else, a long array of safeguards and checks, clogs in the wheel of progress rather than brakes on reckless action. It was far from being a whole-hearted attempt to meet the Indian demand for responsible government and Dominion Status. As the president of the Liberal Conference in 1933 showed in his address, there was no mention in it of the word "Dominion Status"; there was no responsibility in the Centre; there was no transfer of real control over finance

in putting forward the present proposals, British interests, and British Imperial interests had not been sacrificed in any way. This was the bare truth of the matter. The proposals had been so designed as to perpetuate the domination of Great Britain indefinitely over the affairs of this country."

The comprehensive resolution on the White Paper framed in the Liberal Conference simply dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the categorical statement made by its president.

We give here the gist of the protest embodied in that resolution and, for that purpose, we draw upon the speeches made in support of that resolution. We begin with the speech of Mr. Sastri. The first objection that Mr. Sastri had for the White Paper lay in the fact that the word Dominion Status was scrupulously expunged from all the proposals it embodied, and worse than that, the scope of the safeguards was widened to include British interests which in Mr. Sastri's opinion was an "illegitimate" change. Lord Irwin and later on Mr. Macdonald himself speaking at the end of the 1st R.T.C., had distinctly told them that the safeguards proposed were to be in India's interests alone. But the Conservative Government that came on later had changed all that, and assured Parliament, through the White Paper, that they were to be not in the interests of India alone but in the common interests of India and the United Kingdom. The people of England were to be no longer trustees for India but, as Sir Samuel Hoare had emphatically maintained, were partners with the people of India. And "the safeguards, as we see them," continued Mr. Sastri, "were exclusively in the interests of England which was a predominant partner and would continue to be so, if it could, indefinitely. And some of the safeguards, besides, were demonstrably against the interests of India."

the Indian Police Service they erred and their order will be set aside and they will be made to pay Rs. 50,000/- as a compensation. It seems to me, therefore, that this is an intolerable position. If this Paper was otherwise satisfactory in every respect but contained that provision, I would throw it out. It seems to me that India, whatever she does, ought not to submit to such an indignity."

Mr. Sastri 'appealed to persons like Sir Samuel Hoare "to pursue the path of wisdom and not use their power merely to crush their opponents. For that might bring peace which will not last long, and the movement for Swaraj was bound to reappear again, and when it reappeared it would carry all before it. And, lastly, anything less than what was given to Canada and South Africa, however camouflaged, will fail to satisfy India and will keep it ever discontented."

A TRAVESTY OF AGREEMENT

From that speech we go to the speech of Mr. Chintamani of whom Mr. Sastri said, that he was a just critic and a fair-minded person. Mr. Chintamani first contested the claim of the British Government that the White Paper embodied proposals based upon the maximum of agreement at the R.T.C. The R.T.C., he asserted to the contrary, had never been given an opportunity of recording its considered judgment on the reports of the various sub-committees, all of which, in the words of the Prime Minister himself, were simply "noted" and "never decided upon." Even Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had complained in the language of bitterness on the report of the sub-committee on services, that not a word was allowed to be spoken on it, in the sessions of the R.T.C. Again the Indian delegates to the Conference were nominees of the Government, and especially at its third meeting, care was taken to exclude from it men of sober and independent judgment like Mr. Sastri, and it was packed, on the other hand, with nominees whose only interest lay in furthering their

Paper seemed to introduce was a mongrel constitution:—

“It was not what it pretended to be, and it pretended to be what it was not; and history would reserve for it the judgment, the only verdict that was possible—the verdict that was reserved for all forms of political imposture.”

What had the three sittings of the R.T.C. revealed? They revealed that the difference between our friends in England and our avowed opponents was merely this:—“Our friends—not of the Lansbury type but others—the liberals and more moderate conservatives say that the White Paper Scheme must be carried out, otherwise there would be great political danger in India. Our avowed opponents like Churchill and Lord Lloyd say that even this amounts to abdication and nothing should be done.” But to every nationalist in India, the White Paper was a most profound disappointment, said Mr. Chintamani. And he concluded his analysis of the White Paper in the following words,

“We are not going to have genuine provincial autonomy. We are not going to have anything worthy of being called responsible government at the Centre. It is uncertain whether we shall have any federation at all. It is equally certain that such federation, as we may have, will not satisfy any one of the tests of a sound federal constitution which students of politics are aware of. And even when the Federation is introduced the British will continue to be the masters. The English will still remain our masters. We are sermonised at every step by every English man to put trust in them and not to be hypercritical, not to solve all doubt on the darker side; but at every single step, in every important matter, the British tell us, “we do not trust you, we do not trust your common sense, we do not trust your good-faith, we do not trust your responsibility, we do not believe you will be able to administer your country. At every step we must be your fathers and mothers rolled into one.”

The president of the Conference was Mr. J. N. Basu, and the principal speakers on the main resolution were Sir P. S. Sivaswami Iyer, Mr. Chintamani, Mr. Venkatram Sastri and Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru. The Rt. Hon. Sastri who was Chairman of the Reception Committee was suddenly taken ill, and his task of welcoming the delegates was done by the Vice-Chairman, Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer. We begin with the address of the President and will then give from other speeches such observations on the White Paper proposals as strike us to be no repetition of what has gone before.

The occasion was an important one as the deliberations of the Round Table Conference and the Joint Parliamentary Committee had concluded and the Reform Bill was being prepared for introduction in the House of Commons in the following year. It was, therefore, imperative to take a final survey of the whole procedure and show up the White Paper in its true light. So had the Conference met for a second time in the same year so that judgment might not go by default against India. It was no matter whether the criticism upon it proved useful or otherwise, but it was up to those who felt that injustice was being done to India to speak out what they thought about the matter, as a sheer duty which they owed to their motherland.

The President of the Conference was one who had declined invitation to attend the Third Round Table Conference for he had felt that nothing good was going to come out of it for India. And it was in the fitness of things that a public man like him—"accurate in his facts, temperate in expression and just in his conclusions," should preside over a Conference in which the principal subject of discussion was the White Paper once over again. How did he characterise the

dent's speech we take here as pointing to future work. He said,

"The remarks I have addressed to you to-day show in which respects according to us the contemplated changes in the constitution either lead to no advance or are reactionary. But if a system is sought to be imposed upon us which we do not consider to be in the best interests of our people, we must press our views with all the emphasis at our command, and if our voice is not listened to, we do not take the system as a settled fact, but go on agitating and organising public opinion. We have had examples in the past of settled facts being unsettled by persistent political agitation. But the agitation must be conducted in an open and straight-forward manner. And the one condition of success was unity—not unity achieved by surrender to communalism but by triumphing over it. Political caste systems that are sought to be thrust upon us must be overthrown. The forces working for disruption must be overcome; and all must join hands and render united service to our common motherland. If our difficulties and disappointments burn this lesson into our hearts, then no facts will remain settled which we wish to see unsettled."

Now we turn to speeches on the resolution itself, to note some points in them which were not touched before. And we begin for that purpose with the speech of Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer. The resolution put before the Conference was practically the same that was considered by the Federation at its last session in Calcutta. A few changes made in it were in answer to a few further developments and a few further enunciations of policies by Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. The first point to be noticed in these new developments was the repudiation of the promise of Dominion Status to India by the Secretary of State himself. Nor was there in the White Paper, as it had emerged from the discussion before the Joint Committee, any indication of the date when the federal scheme would be inaugurated, and the transition

to the Parliament. It was up to Parliament to consider the Memorandum as it deserved to be considered, and to remove the serious defects in the Scheme put forward in the White Paper, if it really meant to satisfy Indian opinion on the question. That was the gist of the speech of Sir Sivaswami Aiyer.

Mr. Chintamani who spoke after Sir Sivaswami Aiyer first pointed out the fact that the resolution before them was but a continuation of all the arguments advanced in anticipation against the coming reforms, in the Liberal Conference held in Bombay at the end of 1931, and that nothing had happened in the interval between that date and 1933 to improve matters. On the other hand, they had become worse and the objections made then applied with greater force to the scheme before them. In fact, the White Paper had proved so reactionary that no criticism made against it would be considered too harsh by any one in India.

A PRODUCT OF ORGANISED HYPOCRISY

With this preliminary observation Mr. Chintamani summed up in his speech all that he had said against it in his speech at the Conference held in Calcutta. And he concluded with the emphatic opinion that he would prefer to work under the existing constitution rather than accept the new one which was the product, as he put it in the words of Disraeli of 'organised hypocrisy'. He added,

"I would feel we are nearer the day of Swaraj if the White Paper Scheme is dead than if it is proceeded with without material improvements. That is my individual opinion and it is also my deliberate and unalterable conviction. He realised then what Mr. Sastri had said in his speech in the previous session of the Conference that "they were dashing their heads against a stone-wall in appealing to conservatives like Sir Samuel Hoare and liberals like Lord Reading to see light and follow the path of wise statesmanship." I have only to say in conclusion

only on the basis of population. Sapru and other Indian Liberal leaders were willing to concede to the 51 per cent of the seats in Bengal and the Punjab with Joint Electorates and they had agreed. But the agreement had broken down, as was shown above, because of the intervention of the Government itself. Why then blame the Indian delegates for their failure to come to terms on the vexed minority problem?"

The speaker then gave the history of the whole question subsequent to that date, and showed by quoting chapter and verse, how every time that there was a chance of unity, it was the Government itself that had obstructed by offering to the Muslims more than they would get from other Indians. He also exposed in his speech the story of the so-called Minority Pact. He went further and showed how the Muslims could never benefit by separate electorates. He maintained that the Muslims had the benefit of this arrangement for the last 14 years. And how had they benefited in amity and friendship with fellow Indians? The enmity and tension had, on the other hand, gone on increasing.

"The communal riots, be it noted, have been the special features of India since the inauguration of the Reforms, inspite of separate and communal electorates given to Muslims for the sake of peace and unity in India. Will these communities ever unite and live in peace and co-operation if you divide them still further by these means? Will self government for the whole of India ever materialise by the perpetuation of these differences in a constitution that was meant to take us to the goal? Or will there be demands by other communities than the Mohomedan for a favoured treatment at the hands of bureaucracy and the Government? Will Muslims be more political minded and more national if you separate them from the Hindus in this way?"

In support of this speech by Mr. Abdul Samad we quote the following from a letter written by Lord Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India to Lord

jesty's Government in England as proposed in the White Paper."

"In the opinion of the Federation such control should be strictly limited to subjects not transferred to the control of the Indian Legislatures during the period of transition and should be exercised by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs."

"In no event can the Federation reconcile itself to the continuance of the India Council in any form or shape."

"The Constitution Act should vest in the Federal Legislature of India the right to amend its provisions, subject to reasonable and necessary safeguards."

"While subscribing to the scheme of an All-India Federation, the Federation notes with regret that the proposals made in the White Paper and elaborated recently by the Secretary of State, as conditions precedent to the inauguration of the Federation, not only make for undue delay but are neither necessary nor justified."

"In the opinion of the Federation it is unnecessary and inexpedient to create a separate statutory authority called the "Viceroy": and in any case the rights of paramountcy of the Crown, whatever they may be, should be exercised by the Government of India and not by the Viceroy, as proposed in the White Paper."

"The Federation is emphatically of opinion that none of its constituent units should have the right of secession."

"The Federation is strongly of opinion that a declaration of the fundamental rights of citizenship applicable to all component members of the All-India Federation, should be a part of the Constitution Act."

"If for any reason the inauguration of All-India Federation should not materialise or be unduly delay-

CHAPTER XVII

"THE BLOW HAD FALLEN" —WHAT NEXT?

The liberals at the end of 1935 were no where in India either with the Government or with Congress leaders. Being non-communal, the Muslims treated them with scant courtesy, if not with haughty indifference. Their role henceforward, unlike in 1921, was that of critics, a party in opposition who warned both the Government and the Congress how by their action they were taking the country backwards, and were creating a situation for themselves much worse than they had to face from 1921 to 1935.

There were three sections in the Congress which had expressed themselves as to how they were going to face the new reforms. One section of the Congress was out to wreck the reforms deliberately, "by going into the Councils, taking ministerial offices and making the reforms unworkable so that the Government might be compelled to scrap them and to allow the Indian nation to put forth an agreed scheme." The other section did not believe in these wrecking tactics as they knew how they had proved infructuous when used by the Congress Swarajists between 1924 and 1927. This section wanted "to enter the Councils, take ministerial offices, and try by constructive methods to secure a larger share of material benefits in the provincial sphere." In doing its work this section did not deliberately look forward to bring about a clash, but if the Governor's veto came in the way of

was Rao Bahadur R. R. Kale of Satara. In the addresses of both of them we find the Joint Select Committee's Report criticised in full detail, as we found the White Paper fully dealt with in the conference sessions of 1933 held at Calcutta and Madras. The Report they showed to be much more reactionary than the White Paper. It did not care to make any changes for the better in the White Paper itself but had changed it for the worse. The resolution framed and adopted in the Conference at Poona was moved by the Right Honourable Mr. Sastri, and the speech he made in putting the resolution to the Conference contained remarks which we quote here to show the position of the Liberal Party at that time in India *vis-a-vis* the Government on the one hand and the Congress on the other. He said:—

THE RIGHT TO EXIST

"There are two observations of a somewhat general nature which I should beg your permission to make. They concern the roots of our policy and of our position in this country. Our party has many critics, rather too many I should say, and a good few from among ourselves. Well, they are all welcome. Inside critics, outside critics, sympathetic critics, hostile critics, all are welcome. We are not many, we do not pretend to wield a great influence in directing the course of events. There are many defects to which we plead guilty. Our house badly needs to be put in order. All this is granted and granted without reserve. But what follows? Have you observed one curious feature of the situation? We are always spoken of with contempt. And those who write in journals, young men with fluent pens, seem to dip their pen in the ink of ridicule. Let them. But there are occasions when they think otherwise of us and remembering our existence enquire earnestly, 'where are these gentlemen? What are they doing? Why don't they come to our help? What does this man think? His words would be opportune now. He has friends in England, his voice carries weight. Why is he dumb? Well, we have amongst us those whose voices are sought in times of difficulties and are capable of giving safe direc-

appeal has always been to reason and discrimination. It may not win in times of storm and strain. But when calmer times return they may come into their own.

Mr. Sastri did not speak in these plain terms only to his own countrymen. He was equally blunt to those in England who blamed his party as a party of weak men. This was what he said in answer to Sir Austen Chamberlain:

"One remark that Chamberlain made in the interesting debate in the House of Commons, I must pass on to you. Did he feel, I wonder, that he and his party might be accused of having weakened us as a party? Was it in self-defence that he cast the blame for our failure upon our own heads? He said we were guilty of cowardice, we were faint-hearted, we did not make sacrifices, and go forth courageously to fight for this constitution which we knew in our hearts was for our good. He believes that we must spring forward with enthusiasm to embrace it and hold it up to our countrymen as that for which they were struggling for the last fifty years. Now, we decline decidedly and emphatically to hold up Sir Austen Chamberlain's baby and invite our countrymen and countrywomen to kiss it."

WHAT NEXT?

After the Act was an accomplished fact Mr. Sastri marked the event in the Liberal Conference held at Nagpur in 1935, in words that form the heading of this chapter—the blow had fallen. How was India to stand up to the fact which it could not avoid? The liberals in 1935 advised all concerned "to join forces and select representatives by mutual agreement so that unnecessary conflict might be avoided and the best men in the country be sent to the new legislatures, who, by co-operation and the shaping of a common constructive policy, might help the advance of the country along right lines." This would also have helped to organise public opinion in the country and to get sup-

any further pressure on British Government to make the constitution more acceptable or elastic and responsive to future progress." Thirdly "if the progressive groups in the country did not see to it that the best men in the country were sent into the Councils and did not co-operate in shaping the nation's destiny towards the desired goal, the Councils were likely to be filled by men who would work the reform for their own communal advantage rather than that of the nation."

That was the verdict of Sir Moropant Joshi on the situation forced on the country by the New Constitution. He was of opinion "that if the Congress decided once again to overthrow the Reforms by its old method of Satyagraha and non-co-operation, that method was bound to fail as it had failed to achieve the end during the last fourteen years. Had not Mr. Gandhi himself declared that he was the only person in the country capable of the kind of Satyagraha he insists on?"

The Congress after it had resigned power at the end of 1939, and some Congressmen even before that time, swearing by self-determination, had spoken of a Constituent Assembly to frame an agreed constitution for the whole country which later the British Government had to simply endorse in its own Parliament. That right, as we know to-day, has been conceded to India by the Cripps proposals. It may be India's right to frame its own constitution. But as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had put it, "it was chimerical to talk of such a step till complete independence had been won." However that may be, some men there were then and are even now, who think that this right may mean only throwing an apple of discord between us. And that fear was expressed by Sir Moropant Joshi at the end of 1935 in the following words:

"At the Round Table Conference the cleavages between community and community were so big that it was found

in service and we gladly extend to them our hearty felicitations and good wishes in the full trust that, moving along different paths where we must, and treading the same path where we may, we shall one day achieve the freedom and the glory of our common motherland."

That is the spirit which has marked the Liberals since they had separated themselves from the parent institution on a question of principle in 1918 and if it had been reciprocated by Congressmen, the political history of India would have been different from what it is to-day. As Mr. Chintamani put it in 1934,

"the record of the liberal party is stainless. I was its General Secretary for more than eight years and have always been a more or less active member of the party and I can say without fear of contradiction from any quarter whatever, namely, there was no effort which we did not make in order to make possible joint action by the Congress and ourselves on every important matter; there was no single occasion when we did not actively respond to every invitation addressed to us by the Congress to co-operate with them."

And, then, he used words about the policy of the Congress which we have already quoted a little earlier in this chapter. And he concluded, "For that we are not to blame. Success we cannot command. If we honestly feel that we have deserved success, that is about as much as what any man can hope for, and I am convinced that we shall continue to deserve success, whether we shall achieve it or not, for so long as we remain true to ourselves and we place at the head of the organisation men of the character and patriotism of our President-elect, Mr. Venkatram Sastri."

These words were uttered by Mr. Chintamani in supporting the election of Mr. Venkatram Sastri to the presidential chair of the Liberal Conference at the end of 1934. In his presidential address Mr. Venkatram Sastri first gave the history of the Act; then he pointed out how Dominion Status was excluded from it,

other proposals more or less in a similar vein, he came to the following conclusion. He said:

"The work within the Council will quicken the work in the country. In power, you will be able to do a great deal more than in opposition. One gets more support in power, than in opposition, from the official hierarchy right up to the top. Contact and association tell more than the merit of any question. For your beneficent measures you may be sure of support from the Governor. Wrecking as a programme is of questionable wisdom, and refusal to accept office and responsibility in any circumstances is refusal to make these contacts and associations that make smooth the path of work and achievement."

At the end of his address he stressed the conclusion in words that fit in with the policy and method of the Liberal Party all along the line. He said.

"My remarks are addressed not only to Liberals but to all nationalists in the country of whatever shade of political opinion. We know that as liberals we are a handful in a vast country—we who have courage and are not ashamed to own ourselves to be liberals. There are far more liberals in the country than own themselves to be such. I am for converts to our ranks, if we can get them. If we do not get many, no matter. We shall be content with the liberal principles permeating the lives of people. To my mind, those who have decided, if only for the moment, to give up non-co-operation, and work along lines favoured of the ancient Congressmen and their modern representatives the Liberals are also Liberals in spirit and conviction even if not in name. I do not say they are liberals either to taunt them or to vex them, but only to satisfy my own mind that our mode of doing political work is, at least, one of the authentic and approved modes of doing work, and I need not desert it for any other unless occasion should call for it in no uncertain or in irresistible voice."

THE REASON WHY?

The Conference resolution on the New Constitution, was moved by Rt. Hon. Srinivas Sastri, and supported by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Cowasji Jehan-

them figuring largely in the sections of this Act, and yet when this Act is there, not only recognising and reproducing these differences, but making them operate to our utmost possible harm, throttling the development of a national feeling, preventing our admission to coherent dominion-hood one day, by all the artifices that legal subtlety and political ingenuity can put together—that is the framework of the Act—what do the Makers of this Act say in England? They say, “these poor people are terribly divided one from another, how we wish them to come to their fullest stature. Why should they not become one? Can’t we do something to keep them on one platform?” So they say in England, the very authors of this Act. And then the Governors and the Viceroy and other people—what are they saying? They say that because we are divided into so many groups and sub-groups, we never have a common policy, we never have a common Ministry on which they can lean, everytime the poor harried Governor has to interfere and so on. They all bemoan and bewail this terrible infirmity of our race.” And then, Mr. Sastri hits the nail on the head and tells his hearers, “Now this infirmity of ours which has coloured all our history in the past and which I am afraid is going to colour our future growth for many years—that is our greatest enemy. It is that weakness we must attack. How can we? We must develop our psychology in a new way altogether. Can you and I do so? I ask—you and I—who, after speaking here in the same language, disperse tomorrow and vote in separate groups and become answerable for our deeds to separate little communities of our own: Are we the proper instruments for the development of this new mentality? We are not. If we were wise we should have discovered this long ago. But we are not wise, and it takes a long time for us to learn this simple lesson.”

What, then, is our business in the face of the situation? he asks, and answers himself. He says “Who talks of refusing office? I call it madness. What you can do in ten years by wielding office you cannot do in hundred years if you remain out of office. Take office then, however, much the Gods may seem to frown, work your own fate as you would, and then the Governor may refuse your request once, if he is Lord

No powers in the hands of a Governor would then avail to obstruct that work. No Governor could afford to quarrel with his cabinet every day, if it presented a united front. That was the gist of Sir Chimanlal's speech.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir who followed him elaborated in his speech upon the poison of communalism that had gone to our hearts, and which was to a large extent, the cause why "the wretched" constitution was full of safeguards. Let them endeavour to eradicate this evil and no constitution can bind down Indians as this had done. Mr. Chintamani showed, as if in reply to Sir Cowesji Jehangir, how the communalism rampant in India was a creation of the Government itself. He went into the history of the communal question from the days of Lord Minto in India and showed how those who had endeavoured to bring about inter-communal unity were foiled at every step by bureaucracy in India and the British Government itself. He revealed the inner story of the R.T.C. in connection with these attempts. He referred to the famous Benthall circular and to the genesis of the Minority Pact, and to the work of Sir Samuel Hoare, especially, in dividing Muslims from the Hindus. And he concluded his argument with the following observation:

"It is true that the communal differences in this country are responsible for a great deal of our misfortunes, but that very misfortune of communal difference is due to the still greater misfortune of a foreign rule, with all power in non-Indian hands, with no responsibility to any Indian Legislature and utterly irresponsible to any Indian opinion. Therefore, I say that the Government of India Act of 1935 is a great national misfortune ; it has been forced upon us. I once more say that I am not responsible as an Indian for that misfortune, and I repeat that apart from the misfortune that it is in a political sense, it is a still greater misfortune from this point of view that under the dispensation of this new Government of India Act not only will it

The wrecking policy of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, implied in his insistence on non-acceptance of office, was strongly opposed by Mr. Satyamurthi of Madras who maintained that Ministers could do much good to the country in the shape of social legislation which could not wait till independence was achieved. Ultimately Satyamurthi won against Nehru and Congress resolved that office should be accepted and ministries formed in provinces where it commanded clear majorities in the Legislatures. Congress had swept the poll in six out of eleven provinces, and in the end a seventh province also came under its full control. It is with the programme and policy of the Congress just before it had chosen to take office that Liberal Conferences of 1936 and 1937 dealt. And our chapter will deal, in its concluding part, only with this new orientation to Congress policy and how the Liberals viewed it.

The introduction to the Liberal Conference Report of 1936 published at the end of 1937, contains the following significant words about the change in the Congress policy *vis-a-vis* the new reforms. Says the report,

"After years of wandering in the wilderness of whirlwind agitation the popular body has at last come to believe in parliamentary action and is today in office in seven out of eleven provinces of the country. What actually the Congress ministries will achieve will not be known for sometime to come. Prophecy is futile, and nowhere more than in the sphere of politics. But if a reasoned anticipation of probabilities is permissible, it may be doubted whether the ministries will find the effectuation of their large and reckless promises to the electorates to be at all practicable. Everyone will hope in the interests of the nation that for once fears instead of hopes may prove to be dupes, and that everything may turn out well in the end. That will be the greatest vindication of the principles and policy for which the Liberal Party has faithfully and continuously stood in the face of persistent calumny

one group to get some communal favour from the British Government at the expense of another group results in an increase of communal tension and the exploitation of both groups by Government. Such a struggle is hardly in keeping with the dignity of Indian nationalism. The Congress, therefore, holds that the right way to deal with the situation created by the Communal Award is to intensify our struggle for independence and at the same time to seek a common basis for an agreed solution which will strengthen the unity of India."

The Congress organisation fought the elections vigorously and effectively, in the name of Mr. Gandhi, whom Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had designated in his autobiography as "permanent super-president" of the Congress. The slogan was 'vote for Mr. Gandhi and the yellow-box,' and all was carried before it. The result of the campaign we give in the following extract from Professor Coupland's Report on the subject. He says "The result' was a series of Congress victories on a far wider scale than any one, including Congressmen, had anticipated. Over 54 per cent of the total electorate went to the poll, and out of the total of 1585 seats in the Provincial Lower Houses the Congress won no less than 711. In five Provinces—Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa—it obtained majorities. In Bombay it won nearly half the seats and could count on the support of two or three pro-Congress groups to give it a majority. In Assam it was the strongest party securing 35 of of 108 seats. In the N.W. Provinces it won 10 seats out of 50, a commanding position since the Muslim Party with its 23 seats was known to be divided. In Bengal it did better than it had expected, winning 60 seats out of 250. In the Punjab it won only 18 seats out of 175 and in Sind 8 out of 60. Of all these results the most striking was in Madras where the Justice (or Non-Brahmin) Party, which had remained

Mass Contact programme and the selection of Muslim Members of Congress cabinets there is no unanimous Liberal agreement with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. But on almost all other points what he said is a faithful reflection of the thought and feeling of every Liberal in the country."

What Sir Chimanlal Setalvad said about these two matters, on which it was pointed out that there was some difference of opinion between him and the Liberals, will be dealt with in the next chapter, where the work of the Congress, between the years 1937 and 1939, will come for review. It may be pointed out, however, that when the introduction, in which this difference is stressed, was written, the effect of the Congress policy in these two particulars was not being so clearly felt as it was felt at the end of 1939.

BLOWING HOT AND COLD

The Congress had decided to contest the elections first and to leave the question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office to be settled afterwards. That was because the most influential person in the Congress camp next to Mr. Gandhi and its president for the Congress year (March 1936—March 1937) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was vehemently against acceptance of office and formation of provincial Ministries by the Congress. He gave his reason for this opinion as follows:—

"To accept office and ministry under the conditions of this Act is to negate our rejection of it. Imperialism sometimes talks of co-operation but the kind of co-operation it wants is usually known as surrender. First issues will fall into the background, independence itself will fade away and the narrowest provincialism will raise its ugly head. One policy must be uniform for the whole of India, and it must place first things first, and independence is the first thing of all."

In his Congress address at Lucknow Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had spoken frankly on what he felt about the situation. He had said, that he was a social-

for the same candidate, hoping that their point of view will finally prevail. This is surely a unique form of democracy!"

In short they stated: "Vote for us, as the most important political party in the country; but we will decide what we shall do—it is no business of yours!" Then Sir Cowasji Jehangir pointed out the mutually contradictory statements in the Congress election manifesto. He said, "it was stated that the purpose of sending Congressmen to the Legislatures under the New Act, was not to co-operate in any way with the Act, but to combat it and end it. But most illogically, the manifesto then had gone on to explain the programme for their members of the legislatures. It repeated its declaration made at Karachi that the Congress stood for the reform of the land tenure etc. etc." "Now, may I ask" retorted Sir Cowasji "how is it possible to seek to end the Act, and, at the same time, enjoin upon its representatives the urgent necessity of adopting measures through the instrumentality of legislatures, for the true lasting benefit of the country?"

Mr. Venkatram Sastri, speaking on the resolution of the New Constitution in the same Conference, made some apt remarks on the same question. About wrecking the Act he made the following categorical statement. He said,

"The formula that you must use your power to wreck the Act, is a formula which you will find always in the pronouncements of Congressmen. But except for that one formula which they think it necessary to repeat every time, I do not think there is any real difference in public opinion on the question of council-entry or acceptance of office. I do not quarrel with words or criticisms, but I am sure of this. If they aspire to achieve the wrecking of the reforms, the immediate result, I am sure, will be none. Nothing that they can do can really have the result of wrecking the reforms. The working of the reforms will go on merrily. Either it may be that certain sections of the members of

CHAPTER XVIII

LIBERALS AND CONGRESS MINISTRIES

The years 1937, 38 and 39 were, in a sense, momentous years in the political history of India, for they were years during which Congress, the most important political party in the country, was experimenting with provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act of 1935, which, according to Mr. Jinnah's estimate of it, was 98 per cent safeguards and 2 per cent responsibility.

During the twenty-seven months that the Congress ministries were in office in seven out of eleven provinces in the country, from July 1937 to October 1939, they could have set an example to the world, of government and administration conducted in the spirit of 'wisdom, sobriety and right direction,' with due respect for opposition, by hastening slowly with social and other reforms, and, with foresight to win over the most important minority in the country to their side. They did win golden opinions from the Governors, and they complimented the Governors in return, for not putting into force the safeguards. But they did not show similar responsibility and level-headedness in their behaviour with the electorates that had sent them to power. If the Congress had exhibited a due spirit of co-operation with other parties in the country; if it had shed off the high-handedness and intolerance which, perhaps, were justifiable when it was a militant party opposed to Government and bent upon

brewing against it burst out in the country with full fury and proved once again the folly of extremism, and showed how it defeats the very end it seeks to accomplish.

The loudest condemnation of its policy and administration came, of course, from the Muslim League. But it should not be forgotten, at the same time, that other parties in the country had not received a square deal from the Congress during its twenty-seven months' regime in the country. The Liberal estimate of that policy will be the subject of this chapter. With the end of the Congress administration in India had closed one phase and that the most useful phase of its political career. The war had opened another phase the end of which is not yet in sight. The Liberal Conferences of 1937, 38 and 39, deal with the political situation as it had developed out of the first phase. First it is necessary to deal with the impasse the Congress had created after its success in the general elections, and prior to its accepting office in July 1937:

INTERREGNUM

As we know, the Congress had secured a distinct majority in the Lower House in six out of the eleven provinces, and in two other provinces it was the biggest single party with the prospect of winning a majority in combination with minor groups which generally agreed with it. How was it going to utilise these majorities? At the start it had maintained that it would use them to combat and end the Act. After the elections the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution, which, in substance, declared that it would permit acceptance of office in provinces where Congress commanded a majority in the Legislatures, .

"provided the leader of the Congress party in the Legislature was satisfied and was able to declare publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of inter-

"By flouting a majority obtained through the machinery of their creation they, in plain language, ended autonomy, which they claim the constitution had given to the provinces. The rule, therefore, will now be a rule of the sword, not of the pen nor of the indisputable majority."

When interim ministries had been formed, and began to function in the so-called Congress Provinces, the first to shout out in triumph was no other than Mr. K. M. Munshi who afterwards became Home Member responsible for Law and Order, in the Government of Bombay. He declared jubilantly that "at the first touch of the popular will, without firing a shot, the constitution had fallen."

We are not concerned here with the war of words that went on between the two sides for three months when at last the Congress decided in favour of office-acceptance as it felt soothed by the words of the Viceroy, which, strictly speaking, did not go beyond what Lord Erskine had told Mr. Rajagopalachariar in the beginning of the controversy. However, on the 7th of July 1937, after protracted discussions, the Congress Working Committee resolved as follows:—

"The Working Committee has carefully considered these declarations and is of opinion that though they exhibit a desire to make an approach to the Congress demand, they fall short of the assurance demanded in terms of the All-India Congress Committee resolution as interpreted by the Working Committee resolution of 28th April 1937. The Committee feels, however, that the situation created as a result of the circumstances and events that have since occurred warrants the belief that it will not be easy for the Governors to use their special powers. The Committee has therefore come to the conclusion and resolves that Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto."

One is inclined to think, without being unfair to the Congress dictator, that he had adopted a certain stiff attitude at the start to placate the Congress So-

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote on the matter on April 2, 1937, endorsing the opinion expressed by the Council of the Western India Liberal Association in Bombay two days earlier. He said,

"On the legal side I have no doubt whatsoever that the interpretation of the Act by the Governors is right and they could not, as long as the Act stands on the Statute Book, contract themselves out of their statutory obligations and responsibilities. He would not, if he agreed to such a proposal, be establishing a convention, he would be legislating." Later on Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru deplored that "there is a strange fatality in our affairs and generally it takes the shape of formulae which lead to unexpected results."

All the same the deadlock had ended as a result of the Viceroy's statement which, as we have pointed out, gave no assurance demanded by the Congress but added that they might count upon him in the face of even bitter disappointment, to strive untiringly towards the full and final establishment in India of the principles of parliamentary government. The views of Congress members in the Legislatures and of Congressmen generally were in favour of office-acceptance. Both the statement and the views of Congressmen except the leftists in the camp weighed with the Committee in its final decision, though in the resolution on that matter it asserted "that office is to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto, and to further in every possible way the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand and prosecuting a constructive programme on the other."

How the two objects, mutually conflicting, cannot be pursued at the same time was well pointed out in the presidential address of Sir Cowasji Jehangir from which we have already quoted in the last chapter. We now turn to the Liberal Party's appreciation of Con-

What was still more important, he warned those in office not to forget small minorities like the Parsis, the Christians and others. Nothing should be done to trample their rights or harm their interests. While proposing Sir Chimanlal Setalvad to the Chair Mr. Chintamani summed up, in anticipation, the policy of the Congress in power as of those

“who in the moment of triumph seek to tread the path of despots, while muttering the accents of democracy; and may have, perhaps, to regret the excesses committed by them in the fullness of pride and in the moment of success.”

The treatment meted out by the Congress High Command to Messrs. Nariman, Khare and Bose are instances in point, as also the planting of the Congress flag on Houses of Legislature and the singing of the *Bande Mataram* in the Legislatures themselves, and forbidding one of the Speakers from proceeding to England to see and study for himself—incidents which may very well have been avoided, and the avoidance of which would not have cost the Congress, indeed, in prestige and power, and would have saved it considerably the acerbation of feeling roused in the country by this display of self-assertion and arrogance.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in the early part of his presidential address used the following words regarding the Congress victory in the general elections. “I claim that the Liberal Party won a signal victory not at the poll—but in the acceptance of liberal principles and constitutional methods by the Congress.” And he quoted in support of his claim the comment of a leading Congressman, now a minister, that the Working Committee’s resolution on the acceptance of office was “simply a resolution of the Lucknow Session of the Liberal Federation re-written in Congress language.” Sir Chimanlal further observed that by this resolve “the prospective wreckers had become ardent work-

nearly four times as much for some particular craft is quite disproportionate. And where are you going to get teachers versed in all crafts? Further if 30 millions of school going children are to turn out really marketable articles what would be the effect on cottage industries producing the same or similar articles? All this shows the danger of paper schemes evolved theoretically. Cultural education is necessary for training the mind and vocational education should not be imposed till after a certain age."

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad characterised these proposals as fads and warned those concerned to guide themselves in these high matters by sound thinking and a sane, practical outlook on life. In a similar spirit, both critical and sympathetic, he examined the Congress projects about rural indebtedness and raising the wages of labour.

Then he came to the Congress demand for a Constituent Assembly for framing a constitution for India. The words, in the present context, are worth noting,

"A constituent Assembly is known in history when existing Government has been overthrown and sovereign people want to establish a new constitution. An appeal to a foreign government to call such an Assembly is indeed a novel idea. And what is to happen if and when such an Assembly is called? How are matters to be decided if the Moslems and other minorities do not agree with Congress proposals? If some agreement is arrived at, is the British Parliament to be requested to give effect to the resolutions of the Constituent Assembly? And if the British Parliament decline to give effect to the proposals, what then? To talk of a Constituent Assembly under present circumstances is to ignore realities."

THE HANDICAP

The Congress Ministries seeking to do their best for the provinces in their charge were labouring under a serious handicap. It was not the special powers of the Governors but the Congress High Command's undue dictation to, and interference with, them in their day to day administration. About this travesty of de-

like a gentle lamb to the stroking hand of the Mahatma.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad then touched the question of unity and in that connection referred to the Congress Muslim mass contact programme and the selection of Muslims members of Congress Cabinets. Here are his words upon the topic in question.

"It was at Lucknow in 1916 that a complete understanding and agreement was arrived at between the Congress and the League. It is an irony of fate that it was at Lucknow again in 1937 that a complete breach took place between these two bodies and the Muslim League has declared open war against the Congress. Charging the Hindus with the desire to crush Moslems and trample upon their rights, of retaliation against Hindus by Moslems in power in some provinces, talking of Muslim India and Hindu India, on the one hand, and belittling the Muslim League and the attempt to ignore the national leaders of the Moslem community by so-called Muslim mass contact on the other, will not only do no good but worsen the situation."

In this statement Sir Chimanlal found fault with Jinnah for his charge against the Congress, and with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for his vehement attack on the Muslim League, and with his declaration as Congress President, that he would never recognise the League but over its head establish contact with the Muslim masses and overbear it. We know today how the attitude of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gave Mr. Jinnah a convenient handle to strike the Congress with, and to organise and strengthen the Muslim League as a rival in power to the great national institution.

THE RESULT OF HIGH HANDEDNESS

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad saw the danger ahead and, therefore, warned both Mr. Jinnah and the Congress not to behave so recklessly. He definitely said about the Congress in 1937,

If the Congress Ministries had started their work with the formation of coalition cabinets on the plan suggested as strictly constitutional by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, much of the trouble that followed would certainly have been avoided. Mr. Jinnah's bitter complaint against the Congress in 1935 and 1936 had been that it refused to recognise the Muslim League as representing the bulk of Muslim Community. And he was further incensed when he found that in the choice of a Muslim to be included in the Congress Cabinet, the Congress authorities had deliberately flouted the opinion of the Muslim League. The Congress felt then, flushed with victory as it was, that "it can make and unmake kings." Why care then for the Muslim League? It found to its cost later on that it had reckoned without its host. That was the danger against which Sir Chimanlal Setalvad warned the Congress High Command at the end of 1937. He concluded his criticism with the following observation which deserves to be noted here,

"The trouble in this matter is that the Congress flushed with victory at the polls in various provinces, ignores and refuses to recognise any other party or view opposed to their own. In this direction lies great danger not only to the Congress party but to the proper development of National Democratic Government. I entirely agree with what Mr. Jayakar said in his Convocation address at Lucknow about this feature of the Congress mentality. He said that he hoped that in their desire to erase all opposition and establish themselves in the seat of Power the new Government does not become what one may briefly call an authoritarian state using every instrument at its command for the inculcation of its own political views and the suppression of those which are regarded as unfavourable to its strength and permanence."

We have to make room here for the observations of Rt. Hon. Mr. Sastri on the same topic for without them the Liberal mind on the whole subject will not

refused to recognise the Muslim League and claimed that the Congress by launching the campaign of Muslim Mass Contact would prove before long that the claim of the League to represent the Muslims was a hollow claim. This attitude along with the insistence that the High Command's word was the last word not only in the policy but in the administration of the provinces, and that the Congress majorities implied exclusively Congress Ministries had really raised the Muslim League to power and made its president the sole dictator of its policy. The totalitarian attitude of the Congress had begotten the totalitarian attitude of the Muslim League."

This danger and disaster, men like Sastri and Setalvad had sensed from a distance, and hence they warned the Congress Ministries and the caucus that dictated to them against the policy they were tempted to adopt in their hour of victory. Said Mr. Sastri,

"I am not one of those who are disposed to be unduly critical of the work of the Indian National Congress during the four or five months that they have held office. On the whole I think they have done well, and in their endeavours to carry out their election promises they are entitled, so far as we can consistently do so, to our co-operation and support. I am a member of the Legislature in Madras and in that capacity I am a discriminating supporter of Congress policy and Congress measures."

After having said so much to assure the outside world that Liberal criticism of Congress measures was not criticism inspired by hostility or by opposition for the sake of opposition, Mr. Sastri deprecated the attitude of the High Command as being the very reverse of democracy. He said,

"Every where there seems to be a caucus which wants to regulate the activities of all members, and unfortunately even the members themselves are quite willing to surrender their freedom and act more or less as automata in the work of legislation and administration. I view these developments with some alarm. He told the Conference that a prominent member of Government in Madras expressed in the legislature that 'as Congress members of

policy any way different from that of autocracy? They did not mind it in constituting their ministries; and they ignored it altogether when they set about tackling the Hindu-Mahomedan question.

THE CONGRESS POLICY

The twenty-first session of the National Liberal Federation of India was held at Allahabad in December 1939 under the presidentship of Dr. R. P. Paranjpye and in his address he reviewed the work of the Congress Ministries in India which was brought to a sudden end in October 1939, because the Congress Working Committee had so willed it.

"It is now time to take stock of the situation and examine the prospects of democracy in India. In the first place the fears entertained by the British die-hards about the transfer of law and order to popularly elected ministries have on the whole proved unfounded. One can say in general that responsible government in the provinces had proved moderately successful. The Ministers have worked hard and done their best to carry out their programme, though signs of inordinate hurry, want of previous experience, and excessive anxiety to consolidate their own party rather than advance the interests of the country as a whole and conciliate minorities, have been but too evident. Policies have been followed and legislation has been enacted which have not produced all the effects desired. Occasionally there has been a tendency to ride-rough-shod over classes in which their opponents have predominance. In spite of high sounding phrases on their lips most of the ministries have not shown themselves better than the previous bureaucratic Governments in the distribution of patronage or to be above manipulating rules and regulations to get their own supporters out of tight corners."

This criticism has given praise where praise was due; it has adjudged blame where blame was unavoidable. The mistakes that the Congress Ministries committed were due, more or less, to the fact that they were not their own masters, and were responsible to

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Who can say to-day that he has not gone one better than the Congress Mahatma and was beating the Congress dictator at his own game? The Muslim League was not an organisation worth anything in 1935, it became firmly knit up in 1937 and went on from strength to strength till it had become a formidable opponent of the Congress at the end of 1939. About the tension during this period between the Congress and the League, Dr. Paranjpye had some wise words to say. The League had prepared a charge sheet against the Congress ministries based on three reports which came out after the Congress had resigned office. But the charges were answered by the authorities as being in the main baseless and without any support in facts. Yet Mr. Jinnah kept on shouting from platform to platform and indicted the Hindu community, as a whole, as out to kill Muslim culture and keep Muslims in perpetual bondage. All these accusations were simply the outbursts of a fanatic. Dr. Paranjpye himself thought that the alleged charges were not serious and could not be sustained, but if the differences were to be composed and the strain was to be relieved then leaders on both sides must speak and act sensibly. He said:—

“if any body is bent on finding causes for grouching he can always find them. But sensible leaders should take care not to attach an exaggerated importance to trifling matters and should try to smooth out such matters. On the side of the majority party there is too great an insistence on non-essentials, which are being represented as matters of vital national concern. Thus the stress laid upon the Congress flag and the attempts to force it down upon all as a national flag leads to the Muslim League insisting upon its own flag. After all a flag is a mere symbol and it should be a symbol of unity rather than of discord. The same is the case with the Bande Mataram song, the charka, the Khaddar and the Gandhi cap. All these may be very good in their own way but the attempts to

plained "by the general existence of single membered constituencies which tend to leave minorities unrepresented, and more than that even, by the glamour attaching to Mr. Gandhi's name and personality."

What can we say of the Muslim League? Here also Dr. Paranjpye's analysis is correct and impartial. He admits that so far as Muslims are concerned it is at present the most important and best organised political body in the country. The intense background of religion had given it a solidarity in which the voice of dissidence had no room to express itself. It may be yet said, because of other sections in Islam that may not be vocal and that yet are there, like Shias, Momins and others, that in general terms the claim of the Muslim League is as well or ill-founded as that of the Congress. But the worst of the situation was, as Dr. Paranjpye put it, that

"both these bodies are making these claims a matter of prestige, and when in any dispute prestige comes in, common sense and sanity are sure to go out." He traced the tension to its root-cause by pointing out "that the large majorities which the Congress had in seven provinces appeared to have turned its head, and its want of consideration to its opponents had made all minorities feel disgruntled and sullen.. If no victory in constitutional ways or argument can avail, people's minds naturally turn to extra-constitutional ways of action. The Congress party in the Legislatures should learn the lesson of the saying 'It is good to have a giant's strength, but it is cruel to use it like a gaint'."

We may add the rider to it, it is not only cruel, but it recoils like a boomrang and, not unoften, proves the ruin of the cause for which it is being exerted and spent. The story of the hostility and fight between the Congress and the Muslim League from 1937 to this day is an instance in point, with its sequel of Pakistan and all that will be added on to it.

While they have enacted legislation in such indecent haste they have deliberately avoided carrying out the reform of the separation of the Executive and Judicial functions which had been advocated from Congress platforms for over half a century and which is urgently needed. The obvious inference was that the Congress Government desired to continue to retain, like the previous bureaucratic Government, control over the Judiciary in the province.

The civil liberties of the people were encroached upon and section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Press Emergency Act, which the Congress had condemned and had pledged to abrogate when they came into power, were freely used by the Bombay Cabinet. A notable instance of encroachment of the liberty of the Press was that of the order under Section 144 Cr. P.C. on some newspapers in Bombay which was set aside by the Bombay High Court. They further undermined the independence of the Press by giving substantial subsidies to certain newspapers for the purpose of securing artificial support to their prohibition policy.

Their policy of hasty introduction of complete prohibition in the city of Bombay and the Suburbs has met with severe public condemnation. This policy was both hasty and ill-considered. It meant the indiscriminate loss of excise revenue that did not bring in its train encouraging consequences as were expected from that policy."

The Council was constrained to observe that, unfortunately, the Congress Cabinets intoxicated by power, carried away by their over zeal and whipped to action by the High Command, forgot the essentials of democratic government—spirit of adjustment, accommodation, compromise, and toleration. Hence failure was writ large on the performance of these cabinets from the very start of their career in office.

autocratic rule for any country in the world. But in India this autocracy had reached its height of indifference to popular will without parallel anywhere else, except in countries that were avowedly authoritarian in law and fact.

It was this feeling in the country that had made the bulk of its people opposed to Government, as they were opposed to Muslim recalcitrance on the one hand and Congress non-co-operation on the other. Since the outbreak of the War, the Muslim League, presuming to speak for all the Mohamedans of India, had become a great stumbling block in the country's advance to self-government. On the other hand, Congress thought of nothing else since then but civil disobedience, complete independence and abstention from all war effort. The War, again, had brought into sharp relief the problem of self-defence, of the Indianisation of the army, of the industrialisation of the country, and of taking the people of India into greater confidence by the Government in power. It had brought about a stalemate in the country as between Great Britain and the Congress on the one hand, and as between the Muslim League and the Congress on the other. In politics it had made the work of all other parties in the country ineffectual, for it had divided Hindus from Mahomedans, and made the purposes of unity, and of provisional national Government at the Centre and coalition ministries in the provinces inoperative. The Government would not listen to any via-media proposed by any non-party or party conference as a way out of the impasse.

The Government, though willing to make up, on its own terms, with the Congress, had not made any offer, before the Cripps proposals in 1942, that was calculated to satisfy and win over even the most moderate political opinion in India. Its ringing changes on

witness in our midst today, British Government at home and the Government in India cannot be exonerated from the charge of contributing as much, if not more, to that muddle as these two parties in the country. They were all the more to blame in this business because they were the rulers in India and were unwilling to part with any power, whatever might happen. At least, that was their mood till the arrival of Sir Stafford Cripps in India on what may be called his mission of Peace and Conciliation.

It was this state of things in India compounded of prestige and pugnacity, that had made any immediate settlement an idle wish, and might make it, in future, a remote possibility. The war—the dealock—Congress disobedience—Government prestige—Cripps proposals and the “Quit India” Resolution, these form the topics of our survey of Liberal politics during the years 1939 and 1944.

THE CLOUDS OF WAR

We are dealing in this chapter with events in India from 1940 onwards; yet we must go back a while to the end of 1938 and refer to the presidential address of Hon. Mr. Prakash Narayan Sapru in the Liberal Federation’s Session held in Bombay in that year. For then War-clouds were gathering in Europe and they had their lesson for India as a part of the British Empire. He dealt in the opening part of his address with the international situation and visualised how a world war was going to be its inevitable outcome, and then addressed his audience in the following words. He said:

“In a world full of menace to the democratic status, we have in the British Commonwealth of Nations an organisation which can provide the base for a system of collective security. In a world full of menace to the Asiatic and African races, it would give to India a sense of security which an entirely independent existence cannot.”

"We should ask the country to give its whole-hearted support to Britain in the prosecution of the war. In doing that we are not asking the country to do so for obliging Britain, but to oblige ourselves, for the safety of our hearths and homes; because it is very obvious to any thinking person that our fortunes are bound up, for the moment, with the fortunes of England.. If England goes down in this war, there is no question that India will lose her independence, the present liberty even that she enjoys, and all her dreams of democratic self-government will certainly come to an end. Therefore, sheer self-interest demands that India should put her best efforts in order to support England to carry this war to a successful conclusion."

Sir Chimanlal told his countrymen this truth with the full knowledge of Britain's sins of commission or omission towards India. He said that the charge-sheet that India could legitimately frame against England was a long and grave one; that England had failed to equip India, during her rule of India for the last 150 years, for her defence in the manner she should have done. The process of Indianisation of the army had been so slow that under the Scheme put forward, it would take India 150 years before the Indian Army was Indianised. Let England, however, in this hour of her crisis, he added, create such psychological conditions in India as would enable India to go in whole-heartedly with Britain in the War that she was fighting for democracy and freedom all over the world. And in that connection, while not failing to hold Britain responsible for the conditions that obtained in India at the moment, he told Indians about the attitude of the Congress in this vital concern. He said about it,

"Our friends of the Congress have again gone in the wilderness of civil disobedience. Now just examine for a moment the attitude of the Congress in this matter. They first started by saying, we will give England support, if she declares independence for India. That to my mind is perfectly intelligible.. I can understand that. Then they said

conference, Dr. Paranjpye made a speech in which he brought out fully the attitude of the Muslim League towards the Congress and towards Indian freedom and democracy as a whole. After tracing the history of communal electorates from the foundation of the Muslim League in 1906, through the Minto-Morley reforms and the Lucknow Pact of 1916, down to the Government of India Act of 1919, Dr. Paranjpye pointed out how the evil was perpetuated and intensified by the Communal Award incorporated in the Reform Act of 1935. Since that time onwards the Muslims had been led on by the League, that presumed to speak on their behalf, to think that there could be no one Government in India common to all, and India must be partitioned into Muslim and Hindu India in order that the most important minority of India should have peace and full enjoyment of all its birth rights!

The two nations theory was first adumbrated from the League platform by Sir Mohamed Iqbal, though he seemed to recant it later on by adding that he had put it forward because he was then speaking from the platform of the Muslim League. We have evidence for this statement in Edward Thompson's "Enlist India for Freedom"—a book which he wrote and published in 1940. Here is what Mr. Thompson writes about it on page 58 of that book:

"For some years there has been an agitation to split off from the rest of India a Moslem State—Pakistan ("the land of the pure" i.e., in religion and also by its name suggesting the first three letters of three component parts of the State—Punjab, Afghanistan and Kashmir). This would at first consist of Kashmir, the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the Western Districts of the United Provinces, including the Delhi enclave. There is some dispute as to who started the notion. It is often said to have been Sir Muhamad Iqbal, the poet. In the *Observer*, I once said that he supported the Pakistan plan. Iqbal was a friend, and he set my misconception right. After speaking of his

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blunder of the Congress to refuse, when it came into power, to form coalition Governments including in them representatives in the Legislatures of the Muslim League.

It is in this light that we must read and understand the speech of Dr. Paranjpye on the resolution to which we have already referred. The gist of it we give in the following words:

“Services, language, script, all these things are made vital problems of our political life. Politics should deal with the larger problems of economics, education and welfare of the people. But we are all forgetting these things and are quarrelling about minor things. I hold that once for all, we must put our foot down that we shall not parley with this evil. If Pakistan becomes the main feature of Indian politics, then good-bye to all Indian progress. A separate Hindu and a separate Muslim India will mean the downfall of both. Defence of the country cannot be separated for Hindus and Muslims. Both have to live together, for we cannot transplant millions and crores of people from one place to another.. Therefore you will always have this minority problem, whatever you may do. Therefore you must adopt a reasonable attitude.”

The Federation referred to the Viceroy's declaration of August 1940, and protested against the veto it had given to the minorities in India on constitutional progress. It objected very strongly to the distinction that Mr. Amery sought to draw, in regard to India, between what he chose to call the Status and the functions of a Dominion, thereby raising in the minds of Indians a reasonable fear that in the name of British and other obligations, India's functioning as a Dominion and her achieving the freedom of a Dominion were going to be indefinitely postponed. The Federation strongly dissented from the statement of the Viceroy that the British Government could do nothing more than they had already done to enable India to enjoy Dominion Status. It urged that they should immediately announce to the people of India that India

When they introduced separate electorates in India, the problem was created by them."

"I think, Sir," continued Sapru, "One of the wisest things you have said in your Presidential speech was that the pact of 1916 was a great mistake. What is happening to-day is that we are getting self-government in doses and instalments, which method keeps the communal ferment alive. You make one concession to-day when there is a revision of a constitution. Three or four or five years hence, there is another revision and the minorities come forward with something more. To-day the minorities are saying we want one-fourth of India to be reserved for us. If you agree to this reservation you will not get reality of political power. Tomorrow the minorities will demand half of India, and thereafter they will ask for three-fourths of India and finally they will say—we want whole of India."

How can Indians frame a constitution in these difficult conditions? They must first agree among themselves as to the body that will frame the constitution and again solve the tremendous difficulty created by the communal electorate. Hence the right of self-determination conceded to Indians, added Mr. Sapru, was, indeed, no right but a fresh hurdle put in our way, for which we cannot thank Mr. Amery. Then he turned to the problem of interim government. He maintained that a national Government could really be formed within the framework of the present constitution if Mr. Amery and the Viceroy sincerely desired to do so. But the fear was, as Mr. Sapru put it,

"there was no serious desire to associate India with the formulation and execution of war policy. The Congress and the Muslim League exhaust, in the opinion of Government, the entire country. No doubt the Congress represents a major and powerful section of Indian opinion. So far as non-Congress opinion is concerned it has been ignored, and since the Congress and the Muslim League would not join the Executive Council, it would not be expanded."

That was the effect of the Declaration of August

tionalism are terms that can never mean either Hindu Nationality and Nationalism or Muslim Nationality and Nationalism. They can only mean Indian Nationalism and Indian Nationality. In public life, there can be only Indian nationality and Indian Nationalism. If this has not been so in India even to-day, the reason is not far to seek. It is to be found in the introduction of communal electorates in Indian body politic by way of the Minto-Morley Reforms."

NEGATION OF LIBERALISM

Then he came to the political situation as it had discovered itself at the end of 1940. He aptly characterised it as the negation of liberalism. The spirit of wise compromise was not there, first between Government and the parties that confronted it; and next, between the parties themselves that should work together for common good. And he put the position tersely in the following apt words:—

"'I am the State' says the Government. 'I am the State to be and the people combined,' says the Congress. 'I am going to be the State, not even within the larger state, but separate and distinct from the whole,—and yet I demand that the greater will move as I direct, or shall not move at all' says the rival, Muslim League, threatening war if it is not heard. All this has come about because there is the absence of larger vision and the denial of rational compromise as the only key to the solution of any political question. The Government will not compromise, the Congress will not compromise, and the Muslim League will not compromise. The Government will do nothing without the Congress and the Muslim League. It will listen to none else, for, as the slogan goes, none else can deliver the goods. They seem to forget, all of them, that this has never been and never will be the successful method of political reform and advancement."

Referring to Pakistan Mr. V. N. Chandavarkar said,

"The solution of the Irish question by dividing Ireland into two separate kingdoms, one of them styled the Irish Free State, has, as we know it today, proved a path fraught with danger from external enemy both to England and

nothing that takes us in a line and direction different from the path clearly marked out for us in that promise."

As for immediate change in the Central Government he was equally explicit. He did not want an expanded and Indianised Executive Council that would be in the nature of an eye-wash. He wanted that Council to be made up of the best and the wisest men drawn from all parties, and though they were to be technically responsible to the Viceroy, the convention should be established that normally their advice shall operate without let or hindrance from any quarter. Defence and Finance must be in charge of non-official Indian members. And the responsibility of these members must be a joint-responsibility, and not only for the particular department which may be in the member's charge. And if not responsible they must be responsive to public opinion in the country. He concluded,

"that without this material change of outlook and policy in the immediate governance of India none will be convinced to-day, that the country is not meant only to supply men, materials and money, as if it were a conquered country,' and that 'a sincere and whole hearted attempt is being made to win the goodwill of the Indian people on the side of war,' a fact of such immense importance in the difficult days that lie before us all."

And, last, we must note an outstanding suggestion that he made in order that England should be fully apprised of what was happening in India. He suggested that "a mission of peace, so to say, should be sent to India composed of front-rank politicians who had to tour India and see things for themselves and decide upon a policy calculated to win India over to England's side." It took England one year more to hit upon a plan very similar to this, when it sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India, who had visited India before and seen things for himself. As it was said by an eminent liberal, "If what was done in 1942 had been done in 1938,

think less of complete independence and of Pakistan respectively, and to think first of the preservation of India from the inroads of the enemy so that they may not be baulked of their ambitions for India, the motherland of them all." He added that to let the country down in such a dire condition was the worse of all crimes. Their quarrels might be reserved for times of peace. And he said in support of this attitude.

"The fact that England has not acceded to our demands for freedom, and has so often used her power over India for promoting her own interests, and followed policies which have stunted the development of the people or has encouraged the growth of communal cleavage, has filled the minds of many in India with resentment and distrust. They believe that India can never attain the full status of nationhood under the aegis of, and in alliance with, Britain. But the policy of severance of British connection is a counsel of despair and can only lead us from the frying pan into the fire."

While, however, he exhorted his friends of the Congress and the Muslim League not to fight for the impossible, he did not mince words in telling the Government what they ought to do in such a crisis. Mr. Amery had kept on repeating that India's reaching Dominion Status depended upon unity and perfect agreement between the minority and the majority community in India. Mr. Churchill had categorically stated that the Atlantic charter did not apply to India. The temporary device of an expanded Executive Council with inclusion in it of a number of Indian Members, had brought no peace in India, for the simple reason that the key-positions in that Council still remained in official hands. On this situation Sir Sivaswami Aiyer said "Still the Government had nothing better to offer than the August Declaration of 1940. And how was it behaving with those, who, in spite of all this resentment and distrust, were persuad-

ment's policy towards the people, and the method of resistance adopted against it by certain leaders in the country. The president brought home to his audience the conviction that the proper solution of the tangle was possible by application to it of the principles of liberalism.

He said,

"I believe with Laski that it is the duty of the citizen to exhaust the means at his disposal by the constitution of the state before resorting to revolution. I believe that the gains which are inherent in the technique of constitutionalism are profounder, even though they are more slow, than those which are implicit in the revolutionary alternative. I feel that our political struggle, to be effective and fruitful must move round the orbit of constitutionalism. It must seize every vantage of power for further conquest of the state-machinery. It is not a counsel of despair; it is not a philosophy of inaction; it is not the programme of a timid and hesitant people. Ceaseless search for the acquisition of the state-power through constitutional machinery and accommodation of the state-power for the social welfare of the people in general, require services of the highest kind and sacrifices of infinite magnitude. It is only bold heart that strives for action; it is only selfless spirit that shines in service; it is only dynamic mind that builds the citadel of progress. Those who shrink are obstacles in the way; those who hesitate and bide time invite inaction which paralyses the nation. Should I be told that the sunken eyes, exhausted bodies and drooping souls of our countrymen could be restored to full vigour and health by our patriotic citizens breaking laws, and fomenting strikes and courting imprisonment? Those, who run away from the ideal of serving the people through the State, invite wastages; those, who willingly forego the instruments of the State for the service of the citizens, release the forces of disintegration."

Speaking against Pakistan, and emphasising the essential unity of India, the president expressed himself on Hindu-Muslim alliance in the following words:

"If Hindus and Muslims meet in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation we shall

forces of retrogression. The country is, therefore, impatient for new, effective, political reforms."

PAKISTAN

And now we turn to one more speaker, Mr. Vinayakrao from Madras, who spoke in the Conference in the Federation's resolution on Pakistan. That speech exposed the hollowness of the cry for Pakistan, proved the impractical nature of the demand, and showed how financially, economically and politically, the scheme was not only unsound, but, if it was conceded by the British Government, it would spell disaster not only to India, but to the Muslims in India also, and more so to them than to the rest of India.

That the demand had grown by what it had fed upon, the speaker showed by tracing its history back to the Minto-Morley Reforms. Concession after concession was made to the Muslims from that date onwards, and Sir Samuel Hoare had fed them too full at the expense of India. But the hunger was not satisfied. Mr. Vinayakrao showed the process in one remarkable passage which we must quote here in full. He said referring to the last phase of it,

"I do not want to go into all the details except to point out to you that at every stage of the constitutional reform the Muslim demands were put higher and higher. What were three points became ten points, what were ten points became fourteen points; and ultimately people thought that by making small concessions, the constitutional reforms which they were anxious to have will be theirs. The Government, instead of pointing out that these concessions were increasing and that it would be against national interests to permit their continued increase, encouraged these communal claims being put forward in an increasing measure at every stage. If the North-West Frontier Province should be separated and made into a Governor's Province—conceded. If Sind should be separated, though a deficit Province and the Central Government had to give a subsidy of a crore of rupees every year,—conceded.

CHAPTER XX

AND TWO YEARS AFTER

At the end of 1941, the War had become a serious menace to peace in India. The entry of Japan had turned that war into a world-war. Japan had declared war on America and as an ally of Germany. America joined Britain and Russia in War against Germany and Japan. So that the Asiatic continent, including the sub-continent of India, was open to invasion by Japan.

How this change in the War situation had affected India has been made clear in a recent work by Professor Coupland. He says, "Since the Battle of Britain the idea that India might be invaded had fallen into the background . . . there seemed no immediate danger of a German break-through by way of the Caucasus or Turkey, and so overland to India's frontier." But the spectacular advance of Japan in the winter of 1941 and in the early months of 1942, had changed the scene. The Pearl Harbour tragedy in December 1941, the fall of Singapore in February 1942, that of Rangoon in March, and the irresistible tide of Japanese advance in Malaya and Burma made people in India think that the British Command of the Sea was lost, or at least, it could not protect India from the invasion by Japan through the Bay of Bengal. Bengal and Madras were the provinces of India directly exposed to that peril, while it was felt that Japan could easily harass the rest of India by invasion from air.

That was the situation in India in the first quarter of 1942, and nothing was being done to remove the dead-

seemed to portend something akin to a new declaration of policy, and, as the weeks went by, overshadowed by steady and apparently irresistible approach of the Japanese towards the Indian frontier, the suspense became acute. It was broken at last when on March 11, four days after the fall of Rangoon, Mr. Churchill announced that

"The war Cabinet had gone to an unanimous decision on Indian policy and that, in order to explain it and 'to satisfy himself upon the spot, by personal consultation, that the conclusions, upon which we are all agreed and which we believe represent a just and final solution, will achieve their purpose, Sir Stafford Cripps, who had recently joined the Government as Lord Privy Seal and become a member of the War Cabinet and leader of the House of Commons, would proceed as soon as possible to India."

The purpose of the new policy was made clear by Mr. Churchill himself in the very first sentence of his announcement:—**The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made Britain wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader.**" The Draft Declaration that Sir Stafford Cripps had brought to India became famous later on as the Cripps proposals, and his negotiations, mainly with the Congress and its leaders, as the Cripps mission.

We take down here from that Declaration only its main and most salient clauses. They were as follows:

- "(a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.
- (b) Provision will be made for the participation of the States in the constitution-making body.
- (c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:—
 - (i) **The right of any Province in British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitu-**

And he began to interview party leaders from March 25 onwards. On March 29 he published the document he had brought from England at one of the Press Conferences which he held every two or three days. The negotiations began on March 25 and ended on April 10. During these negotiations he interviewed Mr. Gandhi who represented only himself. He interviewed Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Nehru on behalf of the Congress. Mr. Jinnah represented the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha was represented in these interviews, and discussions were carried on separately with each group and section, by Mr. Savarkar and four other delegates. The Depressed classes were represented by Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Rajah. Other leaders, like Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and Mr. Fazlul Huq, were seen in their individual capacity. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar were interviewed together. So also the Liberal Party deputation, represented by Sir Bijoy Singh Roy, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Mr. Nausir Bharucha. These met Sir Stafford Cripps on the 2nd of April and communicated to him the opinion of the Federation Council on the Draft Declaration in a Memorandum drawn up for the purpose.

Interviews were also given to representatives of the Sikh Community, the Indian Christians, of the Anglo-Indian Community, the Europeans, the Radical Democratic Party, the Justice Party of Madras and various local interests. But those who loomed large in the discussions were the Congress and the Muslim League, inspite of the fact that the declaration had made it clear that

“His Majesty’s Government desired the co-operation of the people of India as a whole in forming what may be called war-time government in India, and that they had invited the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the Counsels of their Country.”

for India, viz. to make India a self-governing dominion with the status and function enjoyed by Great Britain and other dominions in the British Commonwealth of Nations. As regards the clause in the Declaration regarding the right of non-accession to the Indian Union, conceded to a province that chose to do so, the Council observed,

It feels that the provision giving liberty to any province not to accede to the Indian Union is fraught with serious difficulties and dangers. The creation of more than one Federal Union in India, having their own separate armies, may result, in certain conceivable circumstances, in a conflict between them. It would almost immediately lead to custom barriers, and to complicated quest about ports, railways, existing public debts etc. Moreover, the weakness of the military organisation of the one or other of the different Unions will seriously impair the safety and defence of India as a whole. The Council further feels that communal feelings would be further exacerbated in the course of a decision about accession or non-accession."

This objection was vital and could not be dismissed, as Sir Stafford Cripps sought to dismiss it in his interview to the Press, when he said, 'If you want to persuade a number of people, who are inclined to be antagonistic to enter the same room, it is unwise to tell them that, once they go in, there is no way out'. This was a specious plea for it ignored the root cause of the antagonism, and it did not enquire into the history of the question as a whole. Rather than eradicate the poison from the system it sought to perpetuate it. The communal electorates introduced into the system was the poison, and this kind of self-determination only helped to intensify the disease it had bred. As Sir Stafford Cripps and his apologists tried to make out at the time, it may or may not be sound psychology, but it was a vicious principle with which to start work on a constitution which was intended to turn India into a Union and Dominion like that of Canada and South

was no minority at all, in the accepted sense of that term, but an independent nation? The alternative and the only rational alternative was, as the Liberal Federation put it, "that the interest of different communities should be adequately safeguarded within the constitution itself and all should have a proper voice in the governance of the country."

The question of accession or non-accession, it was premised by the Council, would be determined by a plebiscite. In that case, without withdrawing its radical objection to the clause itself, the Council maintained,

"If at all it is proved inevitable, the decision of such a momentous question should not be concluded by a bare majority but that some minimum percentage—say sixty per cent of the Lower House of the Legislature—should be prescribed." Messrs Sapru and Jayakar, for all practical purposes liberals though they preferred then to style themselves as non-party leaders, went in this respect one step further than the Federation. They laid down that an effort should be made to obtain, before the end of the war, an inter-communal unity for the maintenance of Indian unity on a federal basis." "If this failed," they continued, "and provinces should manifest overwhelming wishes for separation, then the proposal should be tried, provided that no decision for non-adherence should be valid without a sixty-five per cent majority in the Provincial Legislature concerned."

The Council of the National Liberal Federation of India then dealt with the part of the Draft Declaration which provided for change in the Central Government during the period of the War. On it, the Council concluded that "the representation of India on the War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council was satisfactory so far as it went". But coming to Defence it emphatically maintained that "this should not stand in the way of the appointment of an Indian as a Defence Member. Such an appointment will have a tremendous effect in producing the necessary psychological

bitterly disappointed.

At this distance of time from 1942, it is not necessary to dwell at great length on the pros and cons of the failure of the Cripps mission in India. In the wake of that failure, after a few months, came what is known as the "Quit India" resolution of the Congress passed by the A.I.C.C. meeting in Bombay on the 8th of August 1942. In the meeting of the Congress Working Committee in July, there was a sharp difference of opinion in the Committee on the advisability of the step. Ultimately, however, Mr. Gandhi prevailed as usual. It was left open to Mr. Gandhi to negotiate with the Viceroy before the resolution was put into operation by resort to mass civil disobedience. Looking back to the past, none can think that the pour-parlers between Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy would have changed the mind of either party to the talks. As it happened, the passing of the resolution led to the instant arrest and imprisonment of all Congress leaders. The morning of the 9th August witnessed this scene in Bombay, and, as a result, the country was plunged into violent disturbances, with repression to accompany them till the end of the year.

THE SEQUEL

The year 1943 saw the political stalemate continuing as before and a turn in the tide of war in the West and the East. The result of this stalemate and the various issues arising out of it are described for us in careful analysis and cogent argument in a recent contribution to the Press (October 12, 1944) by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, President of the Western India Liberal Association. Writing on Pakistan, Sir Chimanlal sums up the situation for the whole of India as a result of the "Quit India" resolution, in the following words.

"one longs for the return of days when the Congress was led by wise and practical patriots like Dadabhai Nao-

to conduct the War. They cared not, it seemed, for "moral reinforcement of the war by India," which they seemed to have in mind when they sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India.

The Congress circles began to think, at this time, in terms of mass-civil disobedience. On reports current about this proposed move the Council expressed the view "if such a movement was started it would be prejudicial to the best interests of the country in respect of defence and other matters." This was said on the 5th of July 1942 and, in the following month the A.I.C.C. Meeting in Bombay passed its resolution asking the Britishers to quit India forthwith. The Council of the Federation met at Delhi on the 26th of September and it adopted a resolution in which it condemned the disturbances that had taken place in the country, "particularly when the enemy was knocking at the doors of India." It declared,

"that while strong action was inevitable on the part of the Government in order to suppress organised lawlessness and destruction of the means of communication, that cannot by itself solve the difficult problem facing the Government and the country. It continued that a favourable atmosphere would be created only if the Government knew their own responsibility for unprecedented situation that existed in the country and would win the confidence of the people by taking whole-hearted steps to make them feel that this war was a people's war in which the freedom of India and of the oppressed peoples in other countries was at stake. In order to help the establishment of national government at the centre the Council finally suggested that negotiations should be begun between the principal political parties, and for that purpose it was necessary that the mass movement started by the Congress should be called off and the leaders released."

THE DEADLOCK CONTINUES

The year 1943 saw a tremendous change in the War situation in favour of the United Nations. What

"As far as we see, the opinion of the country taken as a whole is not in favour of the resolution or what has followed in it by way of disturbance in the country. These disturbances were not on a scale which would justify the inference that as a whole the people of the country sympathised with it. Then we know in point of fact that great bodies of Indians stood aloof from the resolution and all that it implied. The war effort has not been seriously impeded.. The Government has not suffered anything but a slight embarrassment in the administration of the country or in the prosecution of the war. That leads to the clear inference that as a whole the population of India did not endorse the resolution of August 1942 and did not wish that it should stand even on paper to obstruct in anyway the further progress of the country." Hence, continued Mr. Sastri, "the resolution recommended that the Government should release the Congress leaders unconditionally and, then, the released leaders, following the wishes of millions in the country, should agree to treat the August resolution as a dead letter."

Why should the Government take the initiative in that respect? To that we find an answer in the presidential address of Raja Sir Maharaj Singh. He said,

"Knowing Mr. Gandhi's consistently strong views on non-violence, we cannot expect him or other members of the Congress Committee to admit responsibility for the deplorable and wicked acts of sabotage which took place in August and subsequent months last year or even to cancel the resolution of August 1942. Self-respecting and patriotic men, who have sacrificed so much, cannot reasonably be expected to denounce their past. All that is necessary is to treat that resolution as a dead letter. I believe that this will be done. For this purpose I am of opinion that the Congress leaders should be released unconditionally." Further, now that the movement had died out, it was unjustifiable "to detain men and women in jail without trial and without their being supplied even with the reasons of their detention." He affirmed that he did not believe for a moment that the Congress leaders would ever advocate peace with Imperialistic Japan or renounce their anti-Fascist attitude."

world believed it. I know the sensible part of the world either in India or outside, does not believe it. We throw the onus on the Government. We say to them the responsibility for the impasse is not ours only. You are responsible. By you I mean the Government. Being responsible for it, it is your business more than the business of any other single party in the country to bring the people together, to put yourselves in their confidence, and so to arrange everything without any long delay that a united constitution is possible not only for the purpose of the War but in the days subsequent to the war."

The addresses of the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, and of the President of the Conference, Raja Sir Maharaj Singh, reviewed the political and the war situation in India during the years 1942 and 1943, and pointed the way out of the deadlock to the Government as well as to the Congress. The food-famine in Bengal, the condition of Indians overseas, the dearness of living, the hoarding and racketting on the part of a certain class of dealers, and the Government policy or want of policy in these matters—all these difficulties were fully dealt with in the two speeches, and resolved upon in the Conference.

The address of the president was full of practical suggestions to overcome the deadlock and was replete with wisdom and sober direction for all who desired that India should come into her own by pursuing the path of united action. While being a comprehensive survey of the Indian scene as a whole, it had not the slightest tinge in it of bitterness, offensive criticism, or self-complacency. Nor did it maintain that "whatever is, is for the best." The key-note of the address was: "let bygones be bygones; let us indulge in no recrimination; the present and not the past is our concern, if only we serve it wisely, the future was bound to be bright. Let us then serve in the present with a united will, with the spirit of give-and-take, so that

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAMP THAT STILL BURNS

Time and again in these pages, we have drawn upon extracts from speeches of eminent liberal leaders to elucidate their creed and to illustrate the work of the liberal party in India during the period covered in this volume.

This review and study of Indian liberalism cannot be complete without a final word on the future of liberalism and Liberals in this country.

Among the presidents of the Conferences held under the auspices of the National Liberal Federation of India from 1918 to 1943 have been men of outstanding character, of distinguished ability, and of independent judgment—men in the front-rank of public life. Beginning with Surendra Nath Bannerji in 1918 and ending with Raja Sir Maharaj Singh in 1943, the Conferences of the National Liberal Federation of India have had as their presidents “eminent men in Indian politics,” like Sir Sivaswami Aiyer, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir C. Y. Chintamani, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Mr. Venkatram Sastri, Dewan Bahadur Govinda Raghava Aiyer, Sir Moropant Joshi, Mr. J. N. Basu, Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru, Hon Mr. Prakash Narain Sapru, Sir R. P. Paranjpye, Sir Bijoy Roy Singh, and, last but not the least, Sir Vithal Chandavarkar, as staunch a Liberal as his distinguished father before him.

himself, the President,—Sir Chimanlal Setalvad—well, he may have been willing to subordinate his views once to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, but after his death, tell me, Sir, whether you have ever bent the knee to any other God. He is not accustomed to wait for other people's judgment to form his own. He is quick, he is decisive, and he has always known his own mind. Mr. Basu, in a difficult province, has kept his head free of all distractions, and remaining true to the principles of liberalism has given a clear proof that he is to be trusted always to depend upon himself and not blindly follow others. Dr. C. Y. Chintamani whom I have reserved to the last—I hardly know how to describe him, ladies and gentlemen. He is the individuality most strongly marked amongst us all. I may almost call him the Pope of Indian Journalism. Accustomed to thunder his opinions, daily, mastering all subjects with a thoroughness that we are accustomed to associate with him, and having no doubts at all upon any topic, Dr. Chintamani takes his views from none at all. He is, if anything, an exemplar of independence of judgment, and I do not know of any single person whom he will consent to obey, even though that person may be a Maha-Mahatma."

Mr. Sastri, after drawing this pen-picture, referred to critics and friends who asked them to commit "harakiri." "Wind up your concern" say they "what good are you doing?" And the answer he gave to these critics and well-wishers in 1937, when the Liberals had lost the elections against Congressmen who were returned to the new legislatures in overwhelming numbers, was as follows:

ITS JUSTIFICATION

"May be, the days of our power are gone. But the days of our influence are by no means gone. Few though we are, we are not without the power of warning against danger, of advising in difficulty, of pointing out the way of safety and sanity. These things we can do always, and now that we are totally free of all temptation to consult the polling booth, now that we can look facts in the face, we can afford more than any other persons in the political life of India to speak the truth just as we see it, to

interested purpose, unselfish motive and enlightened patriotism. I am quite certain that no man will answer this question in the negative."

LIBERALISM

Raja Sir Maharaj Singh in his presidential address in 1943 said about the poverty of numbers in the liberal ranks, "We are told that our numbers are insignificant and our future without hope. Now it is true that we cannot claim to influence the masses of our country men in the same way as the Congress and the Muslim League. For this the reasons are fairly clear.

"But we may claim with reason that though there are many thinking persons in India who are not formally and visibly members of our party, there are thousands upon thousands who in their heart of hearts profess our creed. Every politically minded Indian, who is not a full and active member of the present Congress, Muslim League or Mahasabha, is a Liberal however much he may wish to disown this appellation. In this connection I make bold to say that the majority of Indian Christians—the president himself was an Indian Christian and one of their leading men,—who now number between seven or eight millions, hold substantially the views of the Liberal Party. So I imagine, do large numbers among the scheduled classes, Sikhs and Parsis."

Sir Maharaj Singh concluded "Liberals may diminish in numbers and our party may disappear in a future self-governing India, but liberalism represents something which is of lasting value. It is a habit of mind or outlook in life. It is progressive and constructive, not revolutionary or destructive. It insists that all should have equal opportunities for full life though all may not have the same gifts and opportunities. It is opposed to the dictatorship of wealth, of the privileged classes and vested interests, and it advocates the widest possible diffusion of property and power, but at the same time it disapproves totalitarian tyranny." He quoted in support the words of a

dim and not to dishearten earnest, persistent zeal for wise politics." For these the party has lived and striven, through good report and evil report, and without fear or favour. It has aspired to no fame and popularity other than what comes, in good time, to those who remain loyal to truth as they see it. As Lord Morley puts it, "Winds shift, tides ebb and flow, the boat swings. Only let the anchor hold." As for the future of Indian Liberalism and of the Liberal Party, that question future alone can answer, and, as the saying goes, "he who lives will see". Enough for the day is the day's work well done.

The story that is narrated in these pages and the study of Indian liberalism that has been made through it, reveal one fact more clearly than another. And it is this—that we have forgotten to realise that politics, after all, is a conflict of wills and is one long second best. It is futile to blame politicians, provided they be honest and patriotic, for all our disasters. It is equally foolish to call them all crooks for the reason that a country gets the politicians it deserves. The truth is they are no more corrupt than the people who elect them. Let us quit blaming them and face the responsibility of full citizenship, so that the future of our country may be better than the past that we are swiftly leaving behind. There is no room for optimism or pessimism. There is room only for hard, day-to-day work conducted with firmness, courage and principles by which we swear. The rest is 'in the lap of the Gods,' as Gokhale put it on a memorable occasion in the struggle for India's coming into her own.

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